

THE KING'S SECRET.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST HEIR."

" Give it an understanding, but no tongue "

SHAKESPEARE

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE KING'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

LEAVING the quiet of his uncle's well inclosed court-yard, Leonard made towards Gracious-street, falling at once into all the noisy gladness that a fine day, and an anticipated show, seldom fails to excite in the rude mob of England.

It was after much difficulty, even with the aid of his two sturdy servitors, and not till heavy blows had followed hard words, that Leonard was extricated from this off-street,

and fairly launched into the line by which the pageant was to pass to the Guildhall ; here ended all obstacle to his course, and here, therefore, he dismissed the honest grooms, to their no little surprise and regret, and hence rode briskly forward, unattended, but not unobserved or ungreeted.

It was curious, and almost fearful, to behold how the houses on either side, and every neighbouring tower and steeple, having the advantage of a view, were laden with a living freight, from ground to roof-tree ; not a projection or loop-hole of 'vantage but had its tenant, from the topmost gable window, wherein were jammed the heads of as many serving maidens as might, by any effort of ingenuity, be so packed, to the projecting ends of the beams sustaining the weighty roof ; which projections, carved into most libellous representations of grisly Saracens, smiling cherubs, and fiery griffins, with spread wings and forked tails ; were besprinkled by the bold 'prentices or craftsmen of the house, with an absence of all nerve,

which, whilst it formed their best security, was sufficiently alarming to those below.

From earliest morn had most of these lookers out been thus congregated, in impatient expectation of a passing glimpse of the pageant, which yet they knew would not arrive for hours; in addition to the dwelling-houses, scaffolds and galleries, of all heights and forms, were erected in every admissible space: here might be noted the gaudily adorned privileged stand of some wealthy company, the front hung with rich quilting, carpets, and pieces of curious tapestry, surmounted by the heavily wrought banner of the guild, and sufficiently occupied, though not to inconvenience, by the sumptuously attired comely dames, whose beauty was then, as it has ever been, the City's chiefest boast, together with their liege lords, children, and the elders of the Guild brethren, not actually engaged in the procession.

Fronting this, or in ill-assorted neighbourhood, stood the rude pyramid of rickety seats,

speculatively erected for hire, and uneasily occupied by so many as had money to purchase a seat, courage to mount to it, and patience to abide in it.

Carts filled with country folks from Charing, the Elms, Knightsbridge, and the other more distant villages, which dotted the forest country surrounding the huge metropolis, were crowded tightly together, in all the cross streets, thus intimating the true line of march, and rendering deviation, even if desired, impracticable; this line, in the mean time, being kept strictly clear by the formidable appearance of strong patrols of men-at-arms; these were mostly foreign mercenaries, and were inaccessible to either provocation or appeal, made in a tongue of which they were ignorant; whilst the actual duty devolved upon the more constitutional force of the constables of the several wards, aided by the regular and well equipped City Watch, in their white gowns, steel caps, and bright bills. These natives were quite alive to the absolute

extent of their brief authority, and on this, as on all such occasions, were by no means backward in exercising it, as might be truly witnessed by the bloody noses and cracked crowns of such of the mob who, on breaking cover, and dashing for some more fancied post, chanced ever and anon to come within the reach of the long and heavy buttons borne by these sturdy ~~conservators~~ of the peace. Yet, notwithstanding this penalty, few minutes passed but some portions of the uneasily packed populace, either singly or in parties of two and three, were seen to run this perilous gauntlet, keeping the bustling constables in constant motion—since the men-at-arms rather laughed at than aided them in the hunt; not deigning to interfere, even when a close pressed knave dodged his vexed pursuer round, or darted beneath the belly of the well trained destriers these soldiers proudly bestrode, looking down, with an air of amused indifference, on the passionate gesticulations of their vexed allies; the plaudits of the mob were

for ever long and loud after each successful attempt at evasion, whilst shouts of laughter no less attended detection, and the summary punishment awaiting it.

The mob was only, in truth, kept awake, and in tolerable patience, through the frequent recurrence of these rough sports, varied by the visits of the “Hot-meat” men, who, in limited numbers perambulated, unmolested, in front of the line of demarcation, shielded by the divinity of their mission and time-honoured custom. Everywhere was the ambulatory larder, and its vociferous bearer, a most welcome sight; by all parties were the white cap and apron hailed with joy, as from afar they heralded the coming of the fresh-laden tin-lined basket, with its thick covering of many-folded napery, through which the steam, nevertheless, cunningly found its way, tickling the nostrils under which the bearer passed with his savoury load, and so fixing the before but half-resolved to arrest his progress; whilst at a nod, his loud announcement of “Hot

meat here—all hot and smoking, from Cook's-lane!" changed to the quick technical demand of "Now, my master, roast or boiled?" till baring his treasure, and flourishing his well-edged knife, he at once decided the indeterminate glance of the epicure by the peremptory hint of "Quick's the word, master—good meat mustn't be let take cold—hunger's never long a-choosing—roast's the thing—here you are, I know your stomach—thanks, my master, and much good may't do ye!"

Then dropping the coin into his apron, off he went again, to charm other ears with "Hot meat here—all hot and plenty, and more a-coming!" accompanying his voice with the rattle of his knives—of which he usually bore two, dexterously balanced, castanet-wise, between the fingers of his right hand, making the blade and haft play sharply together, so long as any of his stock remained undisposed of. Hearken to this, ye modern piemen—ye mere shadows of the bye-gone mighty monarchs of the once busy empire of Cook's-lane—hear, and weep,

over the lost power and privilege of your fallen-caste, when in its high and palmy state it flourished !

Along a course, then so overpeopled, and possessing such little occupation of present interest or excitement, the passage of a visored knight, richly armed, and fully caparisoned, spurring in haste towards the scene of immediate action, and at so late an hour, could not fail in attracting general attention, and calling forth loud remark. Our cavalier accordingly found himself on all sides greeted with rough, coarse jests on his lack-speed, and had good reason to congratulate the foresight which led him to change his surcoat and wear his cerveliere, by whose closed aventaile his face was concealed, which else, being known to many, could not have failed to increase the present wonder.

“ Ride not so hard, Sir Knight—you’re over soon already !” shouted one wag. “ Where are thine esquires, good Sir Snailfoot ?” demanded one ; whilst another replied—“ Marry, know ye not he has cudgelled them so heavily

for not waking him till noon, that the knaves halt for it; but we shall doubtless see them come limping by anon!"

"Here cometh a rider full late for the tilt!" observed one of a group of elder citizens occupying the window over the Southwark gate of the Bridge, as Leonard passed beneath.

"Fear not but he'll be back in better time for the table!" returned another.

"The wiser guest he!" cried a little fat vinegar-visaged common councilman, who was evidently more impatient for the supper than the show—"He'll feed the better for keeping well in breath, and bone-whole, and be the readier to help himself. Marry, we shall, I warrant me, have quite enough, and to spare, of these dainty rufflers, with their arms tied to their necks, as helpless as hurt ducks out o' water, and making servitors, knife and spoon of every body about them. Oh! it's a rare place to be nurse tender and meat-carver to one of these Court babies, whose jaws are the only sound bones about them, and who con-

trive, with these, to find full employ for one on each hand, beside their two opposite neighbours!"

"Nay, but, Master Overton," interposed the first speaker, who either possessed more good nature or less experience in such matters—"you take such a chance over much to mind. It were surely small labour to do needful help to a hurt cavalier, who comes a bidden guest to our own board—and that to honour us."

"Tut, tut!" interrupted the peppery little citizen—"tell me not of small labour, hurt guests, and honour—the labour's great, the honour small—and our hurt guests have huge sound bellies: these they come to fill, and after, laugh at our pains-taking. Our King is a good king, and a bold man, though, perchance, something over tall for action, and—Jesus bless him!—I'm ever right glad to see him among us, the more, ever since the time he put his royal fingers on this shoulder and gripped me so hardly that I turned in anger, when he said, smiling on me as he passed—

‘I guessed so goodly a back should have as fair a front.’”

“I mind me,” here observed a quiet-looking ancient, with a twinkle of humour in the corner of his eye “I mind the time, neighbour Overton, and that Josh Judkin said after in Tailors’-hall, that the King but did it to move ye out of his way.”

“Josh Judkin lied to his teeth when he said that in Tailors’-hall, or elsewhere,” replied Overton, in a devouring rage; “and so I’d tell him, were he here, or any that will do his quarrel: he’s a cur, and spoke in spite, since it’s an honour may not come to his coat; for bold as is his Grace, he dare not lay his ungloved hand on so foul a thing. His Majesty did it for some passages that had been before between us, for I sat but some two tables below the daïs, and thrice caught his royal eye as I raised my cup at dinner, so in some sort pledging him. Thus was it that he knew me again, and laid his hand on me in token of it. Marry, he grips like a farrier’s tongs—I can even now fancy his hand on my flesh!”

Here the little Councilman gave an involuntary twinge, which proved his recollection of the royal squeeze any thing but pleasant, however the honour might have softened it. Taking breath, he again resumed his subject with—

“ Him, I say, I'll be right pleased to see this day, and for ever ; but here ends my love and reverence for the Court or courtiers.

“ See here how I was served, and say if I have not reason. It will be next Christmas come three years, when his Grace dined with us, if you mind, and craved a present fifteenth, on account of his cost before Vannes. On one side of me sat young Coply, of Hurst, having his left arm hung in a contoise of rare pink samit, being, as he told me, ‘ sore bruised by a blow from a churl's baston ;’ and, on my other side, whips me in that imp of evil, Hardy Wodeham, son of the Senechal, with his huge right paw tucked up to his chin in a dainty ribbon of tawny velours.

“ They were both vastly grave and civil before the meat was served, and sought to have

my name, the which, like an ass, I gave them, and finely they handled it. First comes my right hand plague with a voice of honey and milk, ‘ Master Dove-tongue, be good to a hurt gentleman, and in your courtesy carve me the pullet I have here.’ Whiles, on my left, I hear the growl of that unlicked bear, Hardy.—‘ Over-done, lay hold o’ yon muscat, an ye can reach so far, and serve me a drink ; for the cast Sir Mathew gave me, has sped me past my own help for the next month.’

“ All this done, ere I can dip my spoon in my own mess, I hear, ‘ Cut me this brawn, good Lubberton,’ on one side. ‘ A slice off that deer’s back, and more drink, honest Overtongs.’ May the fiend choak ye, thinks I, but I do *his* bidding, and, in a minute after, with my first bit on my knife, am startled by a jog from the elbow of my other demon, with, ‘ Neighbour Over-long—quick, hold out my platter for a taste of the peacock, for I’ve a vow to make.’

“ Nay, when I’d fairly cramm’d the hounds to the throat, I had no grace or mercy at

their hands ; for, though well knowing that I had scarce broke bread, they civilly wiped their lips, and commanded the varlets to clear off all before them, as they saw that the daïs had done meat, and it would not be decent for *us* to be so long behind hand."

" But see, neighbour Overton," urged the man of courtesy, " might not all this be done in ignorance, and from no end else ? "

" Hut, tut, malice, sheer mischief and malice," replied Overton, " others beside me were served with sauce after the like fashion, but not quite so bad ; and then so civil were they withal, and craving so many pardons, and there I sat a hungered as I'm a sinner, and all else full from king to turn-broche : the devil may pardon that pair, but never I, and look, if ever I seek such honour as to be so seated again, may I again, for my pains, starve in the midst of abundance."

More laughter than pity followed this history of Master Overton's sufferings ; and now, leaving this honest party to agree upon the plagues these visits of greatness brought ever

in their train, we will follow our courier to the Palace of Kennington, whither he arrived just as the trumpets loudly announced the jousting over, and the lists clearing for the tourney or assault at arms, in which the King was to take part with the City, as one of the challengers.

It was nigh noon, the sun was unusually hot for the season, and the sky high and unclouded ; the cheerful hum of the distant multitude mingled with the crash of martial music, and Leonard's pulses quickened as his eager sight first rested on the airy-looking semi-circle of lofty galleries, which, he rightly conjectured, enclosed the western end of the lists, and which, he well knew, on this occasion, were crowded with all that was high-born and beautiful of England's court.

These lists were marked out some few hundred yards in front of the house, which was a large square built edifice, flanked by huge towers of great strength; but unmoated, without walls, and otherwise wholly undefensible : between this and the lists, the intermediate

space—except an area of no great magnitude, which was enclosed by a lofty barricade of strong posts and planks immediately in front of the Palace—was thronged by the lower retainers of the court-yeomen, and men-at-arms, clad in all their motley variety of livery; whilst far about on the other two sides, extended a living mass, chiefly composed of the population of London and Westminster, few of whom, beyond the immediate vicinity of the lists, could catch a glimpse of what was passing within, as was evident from the flatness of the surrounding space; nevertheless, their joyous shoutings, in reply to every sound of the trumpet, bespoke them little less interested by the report thus heralded, of all that passed without their ken.

At a loss how best to proceed in order to approach the house, or penetrate the mass he was now fast nearing, Leonard, after a few moments spent in reconnoitring, made a short rearward movement, so to gain the back front of the Palace, with the intention of there mak-

ing enquiry as to the mode of best attaining the object of his errand. On approaching the entrance he was suddenly challenged by one of the warders on duty, and, on demanding if it were possible to have immediate word with the Chamberlain, or with the King, “Aye, doubtless,” answered the man, “an ye are bidden to the lists, Sir Knight; else surely not this morn, an if ye were St. George himself.”

“I am so bidden, good warden,” replied Leonard, thinking it best to seize this suggestion, “and will thank you to forward my desires.”

“Marry, sir, but you’ve had small haste so far, or you’d been here sooner. Hark!—ye may even now hear the Marshal’s trumpets challenging the royal heralds, as the King quits the Queen’s gallery to harness him for the passage at arms, in which he will fight as a challenger, on the City side.”

“Then I am yet in good time, since my service is only bound to that. Where does the King arm him?”

“ Even within the palace, to which there is a way in front, railed off from the lists. The Roman Knight—I never mind his name, but he’s kinsman to my Lord Cardinal—Lord Robert of Artois, and the other defenders, have a gallant tent set up close without the barrier, an if ye belong to that party.”

They were by this time approached close to the entrance of one of the towers, which stood open and was apparently unguarded, all on this side being deserted and silent; here the man intimated that it was necessary Leonard should halt, continuing—“ And now, Sir Knight, will it please you to inform me who I am to say to the Chamberlain abides word with him here ?”

“ Tell Sir Henry Vere, that one awaits him who must have audience with the King, his master, before he departs for the lists ; since the errand he is charged with is of no less import ; and as you look to escape blame, Master Warder, use your best speed in this.”

The man, struck by the boldness of this

message, and the earnestness of the speaker's manner, waited not further question, but silently departed, using more alacrity than is usually evinced by the menials of the court.

The man having passed within the door, Leonard dismounted, and leading his noble horse, fancied each minute was an hour, until the fever of impatience fairly made him heart sick ; although if he had questioned himself, he could not readily have answered wherefore was this. He did not in truth conceive his errand so momentary, though sufficiently important ; yet did he feel a strange impulse, which pushed him on to leave no means untried to gain speech with the King before his purposed course : this craving was sudden, strange, and undefinable, but was at the same time ardent and irrepressible.

In really a short lapse of time, the Warder hastily appeared, motioning Leonard to approach, himself at the same time advancing, whilst within the wide entrance of the tower, appeared the figure of the stately Baron de

Vere, dressed in his robes of ceremony, bearing in his left hand his wand of office, and his thick white locks blowing about his unbonnetted head.

Giving his horse to the care of the Warden, Leonard approached the aged Chamberlain, at the same time lifting up the aventail of his helmet, so leaving visible his features from the mouth to the eyes. These De Vere attentively scanned, but gave no sign of recognition, although his look was indicative of some curiosity and surprise.

“How shall I call the Seigneur, who comes thus late and so importantly heralded?” he now somewhat haughtily demanded.

“I am neither noble nor knightly, my lord,” modestly, but firmly, replied Leonard, “but a citizen, named Borgia, and may be readiest known to you as the nephew of the merchant and gold-worker, so called.”

“How!” cried De Vere, scornfully bending his heavy brows, “young master, what mummery is this, and what over boldness; thou art,

doubtless, one of the show knights, too late for thy place—hah ?”

“ I surely was to have ridden in the pageant,” answered Leonard, “ as knight for Langbourne, but—”

“ But overslept thee, no doubt—and thy important message to the King comes, I suppose, to excuse thyself for having so overspiced thy last night’s posset, that thou couldst not rise betimes this morn. Go too, young sirrah, this is overfooled, even for this fools’-day. Go, get thee back to home, doff that heavy coat, and quietly abide by the fruit of thy slothfulness ; plague me no more, lest, losing patience, I give ye worse reasons to repent.”

“ Hold, Sir Chamberlain ! I charge you to hold and hear me,” boldly cried Leonard ; advancing upon the Knight as he turned to depart, who halted involuntarily on the word. “ Think me not so foolish, vain, or light o’ wit, as to seek this place for the bald errand you have taxed me with ; that word which by the Warden I sent, I here repeat to you—I have

an errand to King Edward, the importance of the which, you may in some sort judge, when I declare that not even through your ear may it pass to him, but only from my lips must be heard, and by the King alone. I have said this, at my peril will I abide the consequence —on your allegiance, my Lord Chamberlain, I now charge you to report this to our liege.”

The youth was silent, and the aged courtier eyed the bold speaker with a surprise nigh akin to wonder; who, no ways daunted, now met his gaze, unblenching. Leonard knew himself unacquainted with the set forms of courts, but he felt the importance of his mission, his inward desire was strong, and he also felt that by boldness alone might he hope to achieve it. He now marked the proud hesitation of the noble servitor, and also the indignation evidently gathering in his mind at being taxed so peremptorily; changing therefore his tone, he prevented the reply of De Vere, by adding, in a subdued but even more impressive manner—

“ I now beseech you, honoured sir, to ex-

cuse, in one untaught and rude of manner like myself, ought that may sound unseemly in your ears, and to the right cause impute this hardihood—that I am burthened with a most crying errand—else might I not for a moment dispute your will, or require second word to do any bidding of the Lord De Vere. Bear with my unformed youth, and my uncouthness, I pray it of your honour, and credit me most anxious to fashion my request in the manner most fitted to your nobleness ; but only let me add, please you to quickly do it.”

The Knight looked surprised and doubtfully on the ardent face of the speaker; then, in a more considerate fashion, made answer—

“I am fain to believe thou wouldest not trifile with me, young springald, the more, for thy speech betokens thee not to lack wit or breeding, howsoe'er thou camest by them—but, may not this message pass through me to his Grace, who even now arms him, within his chamber, to proceed in all haste to the lists, where he is stayed for ; the day grows old too,

and much remains yet to be done: bethink thee, youth, ~~to me~~ thy errand may be safely trusted.”

“Safely I should deem it, an it were my own life hung on the Lord de Vere’s honour—but yet of a surety to the King only may I deliver my *errand*, and by him *alone* may it be heard.”

“And this thou wouldest, that I should say to my Lord Edward?” demanded the Chamberlain, yet hesitating.

“Even so: but not, an it please you, in such plain words—dress my rude speech in the noble guise of your own language, my lord, and I shall the surer thrive in my request; and, if you can charge your memory with my uncle’s name, the King will by that be the better assured I came on no idle errand.”

“I shall have small pains to do so much,” smilingly replied the ancient courtier, his good humour quite restored by the deferential mode of Leonard’s address, and the touches of flattery mingled with it; “old Borgia’s name

will not be soon out of my mind, si I am his debtor for three hundred rose nobles; for the which, he holds in pledge the rents of my manor and village of Dalmington; but we lose time—follow me, and we will see how this matter may be best sped, since you are so peremptory."

Leonard, luckily for his purpose, knew the character he had here to deal with, better than he was to himself known; for the chances certainly were, that any mode of address less firm, and at the same time less tempered with courtesy, would have failed to move the self-willed old courtier; who, presuming upon the day, his years, and office, would have felt that he took little hazard in exercising his authority in repulsing a suit so badly timed, even had it after proved of moment; as it was, however, he now moved briskly across the basement of the entrance tower, and through long winding passages, where no bared head, less seasoned than a courtier's of sixty-five years standing, could have braved the cold current with im-

punity. Emerging from this labyrinth, they entered the grand hall of the palace, and Leonard suddenly found himself moving amidst a crowd of nobles, and their retainers of every degree; some armed or arming, for the coming tourney, others having their harness undone, and getting tended the hurts and sore bruises, received in the joust but just concluded, in the which, Leonard was pleased to hear, the citizens who bore a part had won good praise; gay jests on what had passed, and high anticipations were heard, of the approaching passage at arms; boisterous laughter, mingled with the discordant cries passed by the servitors, for some esquire or leech, needed by their lord, altogether created a din, whose confusion was so confounding, that Leonard failed to hear the command of the Chamberlain not to move from the angle of the hall wherein he stood, until it was repeated, in a tone sharper, if not louder than any there.

Thus left to himself, Leonard had leisure to take a closer survey of the motley and ani-

mated scene before him, where he was not slow to perceive that he was himself beginning to create no little curiosity, for many an eye was directed enquiringly towards the comparatively quiet spot where he stood alone; his introduction had been sudden, the manner of it unperceived, whilst the Italian armour he wore was of a richness and fashion few present could boast. Many too were the whispered enquiries as to who the unrecognized knight might be; crest or cognizance of arms he bore none, and the aventail of his head-piece being nigh close shut, left no feature bare to aid the speculation; nor was this curiosity lessened by the sudden appearance of one of the royal pages, who, approaching the stranger, warned him by a whisper, and passed quickly back towards the tiring chamber of the King.

Following the nimble youth a few paces within the angle where he stood, Leonard stepped beneath a heavy curtain of tapestry pulled aside to admit free egress, which sud-

denly falling behind, left him and his conductor standing in the deep arch of a doorway or short vaulted passage; this was badly lighted by a single lamp, whose rays fell on the statue-like figure of a man-at-arms posted by the door before them, towards which the page advanced, paused for a moment, whispering a word with a smile and a knowing nod of his head to the armed man ; then doffing his gay Montauban cap, and smoothing down his long hair, he turned a significant glance towards his charge, placed his hand upon the bolt, and with a grave official air pushed forward the heavy door ; whilst Leonard, in ready obedience to his motion, stepped past the boy, and in that instant found himself within the presence of his King.

CHAPTER II.

EDWARD the Third of England was, at this period, in the very prime of manhood, of a most noble presence; a fair and handsome countenance, and having, withal, a frankness of look and manner well becoming the ruler of a bold and turbulent people.

He occupied at the moment a small apartment, about which lay scattered, in picturesque confusion, various portions of dress and war-like harness; divested of his robes and tunic, he stood, his lower limbs partially cased in steel, whilst by his foot kneeled a person ap-

parently employed in completing their equipment; before him stood Sir Guy de Brian holding out the light jazerunt or wadded coat worn beneath the cuirass, into the sleeves of which the King was thrusting his arms, the good Knight of Wooten bearing the bright cuirass ready by his side; a little in the rear of this group, seated upon the floor, was the grey headed chief armourer, Master Hurley, busily employed in lacing to the lower edge of the basinet or skull-cap the camail or tippet of mail which guarded the neck and shoulders, and bending over him, with eyes curiously intent upon his work, was a handsome boy, bearing the dragon-crested, plumed cervelliere of the monarch; de Vere, the Abbot of St. Albans, together with the aged Baron of Wilton, completed the party, and were the only unemployed persons present.

Having taken a hasty survey of all those about, the eye of Leonard at last rested with pleasure, on a face happily known to him; for in one of the persons kneeling beside the

King, and busily employed in fastening on the genouilliere or knee-covering, which connected the jamb with the cuisse, he instantly recognized his ancient opponent, James Audeley.

“How now, Sir Knight of Langbourne?” cried the King, at length, in the careless tone of one who seeks not for reply, as Leonard, scarce regarded, remained on his bent knee, and the speaker proceeded in his task of arming—“How runs the rhyme that sends thee so far a-field, and at so late an hour?—So, so, Sir Guy, that will do, hold there.—Rise, man, and tell me, how fares it with our ancient Roman baron, Andrea, or Andreas, the silver-worker, orfevre, lapidary, money-changer, or however else may run his high titles—for, by our Ladye, he hath as many as the Emperor, whose unworthy vicar we had the honour to be, till he discharged us from his high trust and service—for the which well-timed favour we will, God-speed, one of these times in person thank him, though not on bended knees, as he would before fain have had us, Heaven save

his humility!—Hah! old Lord of Wilton?” he gaily added, turning his head to address the aged noble, who, in a richly-furred mantle, leaned on the window close by.

“ You owe his Highness so much, truly, my lord!” replied de Wilton, smiling.

“ Confessed; and have a good heart to pay him, too, when able—towards the which comes, I have shrewd hope, this errand from him of Lombard-street—but how said you, my lord, that you feared our stout cousin, Gervais, is over weak to ride by our side in this play to-day?”

“ I know him so, my liege,” replied de Wilton, sadly; “ although you would not have heard so much from his lip; he feels too honoured in your graciousness to weigh his own strength to do it credit. Gervais Wilton hath at this hour as little pith as the mother that bare him: but yesterday, on our way to this summons, though we rode but from Ralph Cholmeley's by Highgate, he had scarce power, when we halted, to cast his leg over the croup

of his hackney ; and although he is something better to-day, his harness yet rattles on his back, as though it covered some fleshless skeleton, rather than living man."

" It grieves me sore, to hear so much," answered Edward, in a voice which sympathised in the grief of the aged knight ; " though I am glad it is made known to me. Fear not ; I will so manage that you shall not appear, nor he be perilled. Marry, we have no lack of candidates, nor would I seek farther than I now reach," added the King, placing his hand upon the head of Audeley—" but that young James here hath been only half himself since his bout with this pestilent malady, that, like a leprous hag, hath ridden through my land. What's here—my espaulieres ? So—let me sit, then ;" and seating himself, to have his shoulder-pieces adjusted, the busy monarch once more turned towards Leonard, saying—

" Now, young Squire. What ! has thine uncle sent me a mule load of the fair rose-

nobles I coined at such pains o' late ; all of which, I fancy, have already found their way into his hands, or the hands of such like ; for, by my Saint's blood, I see them not, and miss them sore. Marry, gold is as strange to my eyes as my breviary ! Nay, lour not, good Abbot," he here added, archly glancing at the churchman : " we intend looking oftener and closer on the last, ere long."

" Your Grace resolves well," replied the priest ; " and, doubt not, the *first* will follow, an it be a blessing."

" Marry, amen !" gravely responded Edward; then again speaking to Leonard, " What ! must we have another squeezing of these rogue Lombards, who so leech us ; they're grown pursy enough by this time, doubtless ? Old Andreas must not look to be passed over so lightly a second time as he was the last."

As the King seemed here to pause for some reply, Leonard spoke, saying—

" Mine uncle, I am well assured, holds all

he owns but for the King's need, and feels, as I have often heard him say, right grateful for the favour shewn him in the late exemption."

" Nay, he owes me little o' that," interrupted the King—" since I passed him by rather at the request of another, than from any thought of mine own—backed, perchance, by some boyish remembrances of the old man—for I mind me, that at the Court of my fair—"

Here suddenly checking his tongue, Edward left the raised thought of his mother un-imaged in speech, and in an altered voice, went on. " But hold ye, I had forgotten—our time is too closely meted for many words ; therefore, now, in brief, young sir, speak the end of this peremptory suit which, as my Lord Chamberlain says, would hear of no denial or delay."

" Your Majesty's pardon—but if I did not, I should have told my lord, that the word I bear could but be said in the King's ear *alone*."

" I delivered so much to your Grace," here interposed the Chamberlain.

“ I mind me so, de Vere, but——Ho, not so tight, James Audeley !” here broke off the King, more attentive to his harness than to his noble servitor. “ Ha ! thou hast strained that buckle round my ankle as though thou wert arming a Saracen of wood for a Quentin—so, that’s easier;—and harkee, knave Hurley,” he added, turning to the armourer, “ let me have, after to-day, more room beneath the right arm of this breast-plate.”

“ I may scarce obey you in that, with reason,” replied Hurley, approaching Edward, and suddenly raising his arm to the highest, and keeping it so, “ for, see you here, now—in thus aiming at a good-will stroke, here is already a fearful gap underneath the brassart for a lance-head, estoc, chance arrow, or other villainous pointed weapon to enter in.”

“ Thou hast reason there, old sturdy,” answered Edward, good humouredly placing his left hand, as directed, beneath his arm; “ but see ye here, master armourer, might not a patch of double mail be so placed beneath, on

the jazerunt, as would cover this gap left, when the arm is so uplifted?"

"Hum! I think surely no; for never did I yet see aught tried o' that strange fashion," replied the ancient man of iron, with the instinctive dread of innovation in state matters, which, unto the present hour, characterises the tribe; who would fain leave the state as Hurley would have left the King, to its antique and imperfect defences; but, happily, Edward had small reverence for precedent, where security was at stake, however gravely quoted; but replied to the dubious look, and wise shake of Master Hurley's head—

"Then look ye, *we* will have the laud of invention here; so do thou see and fashion a piece of double mail—yet stay; see you here, now I bethink me, that might, by chance, in time, gall the arm an if it were sewed to the jazerunt; so harkee, Hurley, let, instead, a good gusset of mail pass under the oxter, on either side, and so hook or buckle to the inner edge of the brassarts, hanging loose below

the arm, as far as may be required, and covered only by the surcoat."

Again stroking his beard, and shaking his head right wisely, the old armourer turned slowly away, and Edward, now fully armed, with the exception of the cumbrous cervelliere, once more bent a closer attention on Leonard, who, on his part, gazed, wholly wrapt in admiration of the chivalrous monarch, as he rose, covered with the gorgeous harness in which the attendant gentlemen had, during the fore-gone scene, been busily arraying him.

" And so we must parley *alone*, young Lombard?" he demanded, with marked emphasis, bending, at the same time, a closer look on him he thus addressed, than he had hitherto bestowed.

" An it so please your Grace," replied Leonard, adding, in a lower tone, " but your Majesty is misinformed as to my country; being a Londoner, by birth, and a free citizen by indenture."

" So ho!—crave ye mercy, my free citizen,"

good humouredly cried the King, “ then must we be wary, having a strong desire to win high favour in the City, of the which we may stand in need ere the year be out—but come, let us look upon thy face, there be none here that may not know so much.”

Thus commanded, Leonard raised his aven-taile to its full extent, and, at the same mo-ment, James Audeley stepped forth, silently but warmly extending his hand to the somewhat embarrassed stranger.

“ How, James, hast thou found one known to thee in this sturdy-tongued squire ? ” de-manded the King.

“ I have here found one, your Grace,” an-swered Audeley, laughingly, “ to whose stur-diness I owe as free a cast from out saddle as ever yet fell to my share, and to whose cour-tesy I owe a debt, which would have led me to find him before this, had not sore illness held me back.”

“ ‘Tis well,” said Edward, with a slight

waive of his hand, “ and now, gentlemen, leave us, that we may give ear to this young citizen, as he requires, *alone!*”

This was addressed, in rather a lower tone, to the Chamberlain, who, whilst all else moved towards the door, approaching close to Edward, spoke some words in a whisper, so low, that it was only by the furtive glances he cast towards Leonard, that their purport might be guessed; the remonstrance, if it was such, was, however, but ill received by the bold monarch, who suddenly interrupted him with—

“ Tush, my lord, on that we are equal, to say no more, besides I fear not the great fiend himself in a free field, an he come without arms of 'vantage, and sans glamourie—heaven assoil me for the vain boast!” then again adding, sinking his voice, as if anxious to acquit himself of any display of idle bravoure—“ besides, thou seest James Audeley knows him; be quite assured, good de Vere—and so forth, gentlemen, and announce without that in a few minutes we will

be ready to go to the lists ;—and you, my lord, bid Gervaise Wilton meet me by the door, I would have word of him.”

This last sentence was addressed, with a kind pressure of the hand, to the aged Baron, who, bowing gratefully, immediately withdrew, whilst following last, de Vere closed the door, leaving the monarch and the young citizen alone together.

At this moment the King's manner was as much changed as their situation, his look became enquiring and intent, his cheerful brow grew cold, his port more erect, and to Leonard's imagining, his whole form seemed more dilated and severe in its proportions, than he had fancied it a minute before, when he beheld the same man surrounded by and dealing familiarly with his friends and body servants.

“ Come thou nearer,” exclaimed Edward, as the massy door closed upon them, speaking in an accent calm and encouraging ; “ approach, and make known, what cause this is which cries out for such hot consideration, that in

our hour of pleasure it must thus perforce be thrust before us ; but that thy kinsman is known for a grave man, and one being wisely governed, this suit had not so readily been yielded, as it is. In a word, whose errand dost thou bear ? ”

“ The errand of the daughter of Artevelde.”

“ Of Artevelde?—who?—What Artevelde ? ”

“ Him of Ghent, so called.”

“ Ha ! ” exclaimed the King, at once casting off the conventional stateliness, he had in some degree put on. “ Thou art un-witted, boy, to say this—*thou* the messenger of the Ruward of Flanders ? ”

“ Of his daughter, I said, Sire.”

“ Of his daughter ! yet wilder ; but quick, say on what from his daughter.”

The manner of the questioner at once convinced Leonard that he had by no means over presumed upon the importance of his errand, and with added confidence, he recited nearly verbatim the words of the maiden as confided to him.

The King heard him with an interest he neither aimed at concealing nor controlling. “Thou hast indeed done well in this,” he more than once repeated, as the message ended; then chafing, with his broad palm, his brow, continued—“ Yet is it a marvel—almost past credit;—how came this said maiden at old Borgia’s, and how is she companioned?”

“ I fear me,” replied Leonard, “ that to make clear the matter to your Grace, will too long detain you from the lists, else could I do this readily.”

“ Say on, and after thine own fashion, leaving no word out that touches on this matter, more near to me, than is the play without—stay, come this way further from the door, although it be ear-proof. Now speak out all thou knowest concerning the manner of this damsel’s mission.”

Thus directed and encouraged, Leonard once more related the heads of the adventure it had been his fortune on this day to achieve. During this narrative, many were the interrup-

tions of the King; and loud and becoming his generous nature was the expression of his admiration, as he compelled, by his close questioning, Leonard to be more particular in recounting his own share of the encounter with the ravishers.

“ ‘Tis wondrous !’ cried Edward, “ and hardily and happily achieved, but the papers, the papers—who could this knight have been, and how came the maiden in such a place ?—her person, as it seems, was the prize he aimed at ? but of this thou art ignorant.” Edward here closely for a moment scrutinized the face and person of Leonard.—“ Saidst thou not thou wert a kinsman of old Borgia’s ?”

“ His nephew, sire, the son of his only brother.”

“ Lives this brother ?”

“ No, sire, he fell with the Earl of Bretagne, his master, in the affray with the Scots before Biland Abbey.”

“ In defence of my unhappy father,” mournfully replied the King—“ and your mother ?”

“ Alas ! my liege, she died when I was born.”

“ Saidst thou not thou wert chosen for a Knight in this day's pageant ?”

“ I was so chosen, your Grace.”

“ And purposed you not to run a course in the jousts, but now over ?”

“ I aimed so high, with the Earl Marshal's good leave, Sire.”

“ And hast thou confidence sufficient in thine own pith and handling to hold a place in a passage of some twenty lances on a side, where rough blows may be looked for, with a rude fall or so for them that sit not the faster ?”

“ There is little I would quail from under your royal favour, and by your Highness's side,” promptly and ingenuously replied the agitated Leonard.

“ Humph ! well and freely answered ; now lift thou this hood over my neck while I don my cervelliere.”

Leonard did as directed, and having adjusted

the mailed hood, as the King placed the helmet on his head, Edward again demanded—

“How art thou horsed for such a course as we have hinted at?”

“A crowned prince might not unseemly be throned for battle, upon the noble beast I call mine,” answered Leonard with enthusiasm, he well knew the appearance and quality of Soldan would more than justify.

“Hah! sayst thou?” smilingly cried Edward, pleased with the free speech of the citizen; “then shalt thou ride with me, I will so order it readily; since thou canst wear the coat of Gervais Wilton, who is in no case to venture a shock; do thou thy best and fear no man; meantime, this much to her whose happy messenger thou art. I will in person come to old Borgia’s, so soon as I may well slip mine hosts of the Guildhall—say so, and expect me; but take no heed that you have other than I may then seem, bencath your rooff. Now pull close thine aventaile, and go with me, and as thou hast hitherto been dis-

creet in thy bearing, so let thy caution be redoubled now, since we seek not to conceal that we are deeply interested by this wild embassage."

Approaching the door, with the last word, he struck it thrice with his mailed glove, and in a second after it opened wide; the screen of tapestry was already drawn fully up, and closely followed by his delighted and bewildered companion, Edward stepped lightly forth amidst the assembled chivalry, of which he was himself the very flower.

"What, gallants, ready all for brave achievement?" he cried aloud, looking with an air of manly pride upon the band of "Challengers," who foremost approached to meet and greet their royal comrade, for such he simply was; the old Knight, Sir Humphrey de Botecourt, being the representative of the Lord Mayor, and leader on the City side; Giovanni d'Ossat, the Cardinal's nephew, an Italian nobleman of great reputation, heading the adverse party, styled the "Defenders."

“ We are over late, my liege,” bluntly cried the hardy de Botecourt, “ the Queen and her fair company have sent forth several quests to chide our backwardness, and the horses of d’Ossat are chilled with pawing up the soil behind the barriers, impatient of the long delay.”

“ And for me alone have ye been held back ?” enquired the King ; “ I trust, Sir Humphrey, that you denounced to our gentle summoners the true and only laggard on this side, for ’tis but fair the blame should be rightly fitted ; but now, gentlemen, let us forth, and do the City as small disgrace as such poor champions may—de Wilton, first a word with you.”

Sir Gervais stepped aside, and bent his ear to receive the royal command ; for the space of a couple of minutes Edward earnestly, but in whisper, addressed the Knight, then having significantly glanced his eye towards Leonard, added aloud, “ fear not, the hardihood of Gervais de Wilton hath been too often proved to be readily tainted ; do thou my bidding,

therefore, and be speedy, since we must mount ;" then turning to the expectant group before him, he gaily cried, "Lead on, Sir Humphrey, and let us each look close to our horse's gear. Forgetting not the old saw :—

" 'He must sit well
Who sits in loose sell.' "

With these words the gallant *cortége* followed their leader towards the great door, Edward mingling freely with every group, and exchanging cheerful greeting with all.

Leonard meantime, in obedience to the understood motion of Sir Gervais de Wilton, had once more entered the tiring chamber of royalty, now unguarded, untenanted, and silent, whilst from without the distant huzzas of the people proclaimed the eagerly looked for announcement of the Challengers' approach.

"I am commanded by his Grace," said Sir Gervais, "to exchange helmet and surcoat with you, and, truth to say, am little loath to yield

my place, since I feel but ill able to do honour to myself or help to any, being as yet at times sore fevered and weak of body. You are doubtless, Sir Knight, already advised of this matter?"

"His Grace has been pleased to make known to me my honourable service," answered Leonard, "and trust me, Sir Gervais, I will do my devoir not to disgrace the Sheriff's coat and chain, for I see you wear them."

With few other words, since the event was in truth equally a matter of surprise to both, they proceeded to effect an exchange of sur-coats and head gear, mutually assisting each other in their re-adjustment; and, this effected, hastily crossed the hall, to behold every rider ready and in order of place by his horse's head. On Leonard taking his stand, where he saw Soldan held by an esquire bearing the Sheriff's cognizance, the King nodded significantly towards the old knight leader, and the latter, shortening at the motion his left hand on his rein, cried with a loud voice—

“ Sound trumpet, and mount, gallants for the City.”

At the trumpet's sound, the well ordered band rose as one man from the ground and together sank into their saddles ; then, after a proud glance along the glittering array, the veteran soberly took his place of leading, and with the next command, “ make forward, gentlemen,” set the iron mass slowly in motion towards the entrance from the court into the enclosed way leading to the field.

CHAPTER III.

LEONARD had now time to observe that he was the second file from the front, and that immediately before him rode the King, and on his left hand a cavalier, whose large proportions readily proclaimed Lord Harry Beaumont; this knight, a giant in bulk, was yet horsed on a destrier who by his elastic and free tread, seemed well able to endure his load.

Amidst the loud clangour of martial music, and the yet louder cheers of the spectators of all degrees, under the curious scrutiny of

men, and the bright artillery of ladies' eyes, the City's champions ranged themselves gallantly behind the barriers, at the eastern end of the lists ; and here, ordered in a double line, awaited, whilst the Marshal and the attendant heralds paraded the course, preceded by the runners, who with their keen sight bent upon the ground, ranged nimbly over the lists, seeking to detect and remove any impediment accidentally or maliciously thrown within, which might cut or lame the horses' feet. Overlooking this service, the high authorities slowly guided their well managed pacers back to their proper stations ; then read aloud the rules of the tourney, forbidding all unequal, secret, or other arms than those appointed ; all daggers, estoes, or other sharp weapons ; charms, spelled harness, written words, or other tricks of glamour ; lastly, enjoining that prompt attention should be given to the Marshal's signal to hold hands, and free course permitted to esquires seeking to remove their masters from the throng.

Whilst this somewhat tiresome, but yet needful formule, was being duly run through, Leonard had ample time to survey the arena on which he was about so unexpectedly to appear, and in such brave company.

The space allotted for the warlike game described an oblong square, of about eighty yards in length, by half that in breadth ; the lists, or high barrier so called, which had, during the mildersport of the joust, divided this ground into equal parts, and hindered the tilters from any closer personal contact than might be achieved over this with their lances, was now cleared away, for the more perilous passage of arms ; wherein, horse and man might engage as closely and freely as they chose, with the bated or blunted weapons allowed ; the ample course now, therefore, extended unbroken up to the opposite galleries, which, like a slightly bended bow, gracefully swept round the upper end of the arena.

These galleries were bravely painted, and had their fronts richly hung with velours, silks,

and cloth of gold, and, fluttering high above their tented roof rose banners, pennons, and scrolls lettered with quaint devices, and mottoes plainly embroidered, by aid of which the most distant looker on was readily enabled to know how each was filled.

From the centre canopy, which towered above the rest, heavily waved the royal flag, giving note that Philippa of Hainault, and her fair court, were seated beneath. Over the gallery on her right hung the City's banner, and herein were seated the Mayor of London, the Aldermen, and Sheriffs, who held the place of challengers in this day's adventure ; and right well did their rich gowns, their jewelled bonnets, and hoods, their massive golden chains, and comely portly persons, become the title they claimed of Barons of London.

On the left of the Queen was seated England's present hope, as he afterwards became her proudest glory, Edward of Wales ; surrounded by a gallant band of his own age, composed of the forward youth of England,

his companions ; many of whom ran him hard, even to the close of his after-race for fame ; whilst others in the bloody fields of France, plucked their first laurelled chaplet, only to deck their early shrouds.

The Prince had been appointed leader of the “**Defenders**,” on this day, but, having sorely sprained his ankle by a fall from his horse, was unwillingly forced to resign this place of honour, and now sat, with a half frown of impatience, awaiting the tardy charge, in which he, unluckily, could take no part more active.

Annexed to the Prince's gallery, but less elevated, and not having, like the others, any stand beneath, for officers or other attendants, was a small enclosure, so curtained and latticed in front, as to completely skreen its occupants from outward recognition : the appearance of this portion of the gallery was well calculated to excite curiosity, and accordingly, many were the speculations hazarded as to its probable inmates ; some boldly asserted that here was seated a beautiful paramour of the

Prince's, thus hidden in order to give no scandal to the Queen his mother: others rejected this shameful impeachment of the young Edward's morals, and, with a greater shew of reason, assigned the mysterious space to the occupancy of the Cardinal d'Ossat, who, as a churchman, could not decently, with unveiled face, view a sport which the church denounced as cruel and ungodly; and yet, as an uncle, might feel desirous to look upon his nephew's prowess: this, in truth, being most in the spirit of the age, was the received opinion; although there were not wanting some who, with more bated breath, ventured to assert that the person thus curtained in, was no other than the Queen Dowager Isabella, who, although not publicly permitted to stray beyond the Park of Risings, was, by her dutiful and yet most attached son, thus allowed to share in the pleasures of the tournament, whose fearful and rude encounter, even the most delicate, at this period, sought, as the highest

and most exciting enjoyment that could be offered.

This last wild conjecture was, however, but little known, and Leonard, attracted like others by the evident concealment intended, was yet inwardly conjecturing the cause, when his thoughts were recalled to his present duty by the shrill blast of a trumpet from the rear.

In a moment after, at the Marshal's loud command, the stout entrance barriers before them were withdrawn, and, led by their veteran chief, they defiled into the arena, and slowly paraded towards the upper end of the lists; until the head of the column being arrived within a few paces of the front of the galleries already mentioned; they were here once more wheeled into line, whilst white hands, and 'broidered scarf's, and silken favours, waved before them, from the fair creatures there; and flashed upon them, bright glances, ill to bide, of joy, and hope, and pride, or the yet more dangerous gleams shot from the tear-

dimmed eye, wherein mingled fearful apprehension with fond love.

“I here come,” cried Sir Humphrey de Botecourt, addressing himself to the Lord Mayor, “followed by a number of brave gentlemen, who are already known and named, to do the City’s challenge against an equal number, come they from west or east, or north or south, on the part of you the Mayor, and of the honourable the Aldermen and Sheriffs, here your compeers, whose names have been already full rehearsed, and to whom be all the honour of this day: say then—do ye here accept us as your champions, and freely trust unto our manful and loyal keeping, the City’s gage?”

The Mayor, in his turn, arose—and the tall form and fine features of Sir William Pounteny well became and graced his place and the occasion. The watchful multitude held their breaths, as, in a clear toned voice, heard far a-field, he made prompt reply.

“Sir Humphrey de Botecourt, and you, brave sirs, who do upon this day such honour

to our poor coats; we do as surely rely on you as we might on our own hearts, did they yet stir in as youthful and stout bosoms as the manfullest before us: but, since age and ease, and lack of warlike use, have tainted in some of us both thew and sinew, making the flesh unfit to do the spirit's bidding, we here thank ye fairly, and trust you freely with this honourable gage—and, in the name of God and St. Paul, bid ye cry 'London!' and set on."

The "Challengers" next saluted the galleries, and again changed front, to behold in battle array, though yet without the barriers, d'Ossat and his companions.

The forms were now quickly hurried on; the injunctions of the Marshal to silence, and against all aid, by deed, or word, or sign, were nigh drowned by the loud neighing of the impatient destriers of either party; who strained their fiery eyes upon each other, fretfully toothing the bits, and smiting with their armed hoofs the ground, as if conscious of their business, and panting to begin the affray.

“In our saint’s name, good Herald, cut short old Montagu’s preamble, else will he preach on for ever!” cried the King, who had place in the front rank, to the right of the line. The Herald, thus ordered, promptly obeyed, and at his signal the trumpets of the “Challengers” sounded, and were as loudly replied to from the other end of the course; at the same moment the barriers were once more withdrawn, and the “Defenders” quickly entering, formed their line.

The Marshal saw the purposed interruption, but it was too late to prevent or remedy that which was already done, without many words, and much lost time; contenting himself, therefore, with casting a dark look towards the offending Herald, he hastily galloped to his post, followed by his officers, and having seen the lists closed, he loudly gave the word—

“Sound trumpets, cry, heralds, and fare forward, brave knights!”

At that moment both the opposing masses were in active motion, whilst not an after

sound was heard but the ringing of armour, and the heavy, regular trampling of horse.

Giovaanni d'Ossat, a tried soldier and accomplished cavalier, had so ordered his force, that, as the front advanced briskly, the two wings should slightly recede, thus offering to the long opposing line the point of a wedge formed by the best lances of his party; by whose good help the novelty of this movement, and the great weight he should bring to bear on one point, he looked to penetrate quite through, and divide his adversaries' battle; in which case it was arranged, to bear down, in a body, quickly to their left, upon the right of the other party, (where, it was known, the King would fight in person,) and, with their whole force, overwhelm this moiety, before they might reform their broken array.

But the wily Italian found himself foiled in wit, where he had only looked to encounter individual and brute force; for the well experienced de Botecourt no sooner beheld the first movement of d'Ossat, than he divined his pur-

pose. Changing, whilst in motion, his line into a column, by rapidly throwing back his left flank, to which he galloped in person, leaving the lead to the King, he avoided the enemy's front, and falling on the unexpecting face of the wedge, burst through it like a thunderbolt ; and here the affair might have been decided, had but the "Challengers" wisely obeyed their leader's voice, and reformed their shaken rank ; for full one-third of the "Defenders" were over-borne, with a loss of some five or six, only, of the City's champions.

But hotly horsed, and assured of easy victory, most of the younger knights, ambitious only of personal distinction—their leader's cry and the trumpet's sound, both unheard, or worse, unheeded—bore them each, as he best might, right upon the yet unattainted mass before them, to be beaten back from its iron front, as the light spray flies from the face of the fixed rock the mighty wave has burst upon in vain. For, in a minute's space d'Ossat had repaired, in a great degree, the disaster his ri-

vals' unthought-for penetration and quick action had occasioned.

The Challengers too, being well nigh composed of foreigners, Flemings, French, and Germans, most of whom were grown grey in arms, they made up in tact and ready discipline, more than the 'vantage a first glance would but lately have accorded to their less experienced opposers.

It was not that until in these desultory attacks, many of their best were unhorsed, that this party was made sensible of its error, and at the same time found, that their knowledge was gained almost too late, as well as bought too dear ; for the Defenders were, now, evidently about, having abided their time, to become, in turn, the assailants.

“ Up lances, gentlemen ; for God's sake rein back—hard back, even to the barrier !” shouted de Botecourt, actively covering his menaced front, and enforcing his orders—“ So, gentlemen, serry your files—nay, yet back, I say—round to the rear, you, Courtenay, and

Cholmeley; your horses are hard blown.—Fye, fye, your Grace, I did not look for this mad play from you—rein by me, here,”—and the reproved monarch silently took the place appointed him, and, having back’d till they nearly touched the barrier, the old Knight continued—“ So, stand we now fast—halt here, and pass no man from his rank, or we are scattered like chaff, and shamed for ever. If we can abide their shock, let them, in God’s name, go back as they best may—and charge not in turn, I pray ye, without the word. So, they come—now, down lances and sit fast.”

Down went the long lances at the word, and down, too, came the Defenders on the blown City troop, shouting, cheerfully, their cry of “ d’Ossat !” “ d’Ossat !” “ St. Peter for Rome !” “ Through them, brave Seigneurs ! then strike in the gap, with maule and glaive !”

And fearful, in truth, was the gap now made on both sides. Horse and rider came tumbling to the ground; tough lances were shivered like

parched reeds, stout shields rent, and helmets burst from their wearers' heads, who, heedless of risk, yet struck fiercely in the press.

Leonard now found himself one of the few cavaliers yet left in saddle, after this last shock ; and, as his gallant Soldan burst through the dark assailing line before, and with well-planted lance he fairly bore down his antagonist, his heart leaped joyfully within him, for, at that moment he heard the clear voice of the King shout, as he spurred by his side—“ St. Mary !—a good lance, and a better blow !—Wheel thou now short with me, young Borgia, and deal we such another course, for our ladye's love, and if these lances again hold it out, I'll head them both with pure gold, and hang them over the altar of St. Edmund, in memory of this day. “ Now cry, a City !”—“ Edward for London !” shouted the gallant monarch, as, with the four or five lances yet about him, he dashed upon full double the number of d'Ossat's party. They met : Leonard's tough lance shivered against the shield of the Knight before him,

whilst his own was, in turn, riven from his neck ; he beheld his adversary fall, and was himself shaken in his seat, when, before he could recover, he felt himself tightly grasped about the body, by a passing rider, and his vexed horse rush fairly from beneath him.

For a moment he was scarce sensible of his true situation, so well and quickly was the feat achieved ; nor was he roused to positive exertion, till he felt his bearer relaxing his hold, in order to cast him to the ground, amidst the loud plaudits of the galleries, to the front of which his captor had borne him, clear of the press.

In that moment of perception, he, by a desperate exertion, grasped, with one hand, the high pommel of the war-saddle under him, casting, at the same time, the other arm tightly about the body of the Knight, whose efforts to shake him off became now furious, but ineffectual. In vain he spurred his mettled horse to a high volt—the fixed, tenacious gripe of the young and vigorous citizen was not to be attainted. The direct efforts of the cavalier by degrees re-

laxed, but he drove his horse madly over the field, whilst all eyes became bent on the result of this strange struggle, few others being, by this time, left mounted, save themselves.

Soon after the discovery that his antagonist's assaults were becoming less vigorous, Leonard, by an active succession of strong muscular efforts, at length managed to throw his right leg over the horse's neck, and raise himself face to face with his captor, whose rein being thus suddenly tightened, bore so hard on the destrier's mouth, that he reared bodily up, and after, for a moment, pawing the air, fell heavily back: rein, housing gear, and girths gave way; every fastening was rent by the mighty effort of the gallant beast, and Leonard found himself upon the earth, unhurt, with his antagonist stretched motionless beneath him.

“ Well, and toughly tried, and happily carried, by our Ladye,” called out a voice from above—“ the most venturous passage of the day, I'll maintain.”

“ Ho, boy! 'tis the Prince that speaks, Len,” cried a well-known voice close by his ear. Unhelmeted, confused, breathless, half-stunned, and half-bewildered, Leonard first bent his eyes upon the bold, well-pleased features of Hawkwood, then raised them towards the gallery he became warned was so highly tenanted; at that moment his passing glance was arrested by a pale, but a most striking face, which, half bent from that strange inclosure, seemed greedily to scan his features: their looks met; 'twas but for a second; for, with a loud and fearful scream, that ladye threw back her head, covered her pallid face with her spread palms, and, rising, was in a moment hidden from sight. Whilst he was yet gazing in wonder on the now vacant place, his ears yet filled with that piercing cry, and altogether motionless from bewilderment, partly caused by the late fall, and increased by this new and inconceivable surprise, Leonard felt a heavy hand grasp his arm, and, thus awakened,

recognized, instantly, the voice of the King, who stood yet helmeted by his side.

“ Well done, well done, young Borgia!” the monarch cried, in a tone of frank approval, which made the heart of the young man bound high within him. “ By God’s truth, thou hast right well and bravely credited the City’s breeding on this day ; and, by my word, an thou wilt, shalt henceforth ride amongst our gentle esquires ; and, on some well foughten day, soon to come, we doubt not to see thee earn thy spurs by our side, amongst the foremost riding there : a place,” continued the King, in a merry tone, but less loud, as the new esquire made low obeisance for this unthought for honour—“ which, if we mistake not thy mettle, will chime in better with thy humour than biding to grow rusty at home, or coming forth twice or thrice a year, to tilt in Smithfield, or play pageant knight before holiday sight-seekers. Make no answer now,” the monarch added, perceiving Leonard about to sink on his knee,

“ bide thou still while I speak some words with one whom I see hurrying hitherward.”

So ending, Edward stepped forward a few paces to meet him of whom he spoke ; and, thus left alone, our hero had, for a second time, full opportunity to look heedfully over the now changed aspect of the so late well ordered field.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Marshal had thrown down his staff—his trumpet had sounded a retreat—the fausse lists were thrown open, and from them issued the Constable; who, attended by his serjeants-at-arms, heralds, and poursuivants, now paraded within the arena of the *mélée*, proclaiming on all sides a cessation of combat, and separating the parties yet engaged on the ground, whilst the field rang with the heralds' cries of “ Hold hands—down weapons all !” “ Well fought, good knights and gallant gentlemen—be loyal and wise, as hardy and

brave—and strike no blow more! Enough is done—here is honour won for both sides, though fortune abides but with one."

These and the like words were, when needful, promptly enforced by a personal interference; nor were such strong-armed precautions needlessly or prematurely applied, since at the close of this rough game, when men often found themselves fellowed foot to foot, and, in hot blood, exchanging blow for blow, although with blunted weapons, dangerous consequences often did, and were always likely to ensue, in the event of an over prolonged contest.

The esquires and pages, also, of the principals, being allowed to enter within the field, as their several masters required help, were necessarily, toward the end of the affray, congregated in considerable numbers; and these were all ready enough, on the slightest occasion, to extend their limited service to a more active share in the combat.

It was, we ought here to observe, during the first confusion consequent upon the Con-

stable's interference, that the closing words of the last chapter were addressed to Leonard by the King; who, setting in his own person the earliest example of obedience to the Marshal's signal, instantly stayed his arm, which had so greatly contributed to the good fortune of his party, and retiring out of the throng, towards the western limit of the course, arrived here just in time to see our young citizen rise, having before witnessed the tenacity with which he had kept his hold on his vexed captor; and the nerve and agility which had ultimately given him masterdom over no less an opponent, as it now appeared, than Giovanni d'Ossat himself, the leader of the "Defenders," and who was renowned for his address and fortune in all warlike exercises.

"Stay not thou for the pageant's slow progress," continued the King, in an under tone, turning again to Leonard, after whispering earnestly for a few seconds with Audeley, who now bowed his acknowledgements—"here is James Audeley will see thee back to the house,

and so refreshed that thou mayst quickly ride forward on our already spoken errand—thou art unhurt?"

"Wholly, my liege," replied Leonard, "and am ready, an it so please you, to ride on even now for home."

"Not so—go back to the palace, and first don thine own gear: and hark here—think not that thou wilt lose any honour by going now from hence; leave that to my care; fear not but in fit time and season thou shalt receive thy due."

The King here desired Audeley, who had heard the greater part of this dialogue, to lead Leonard away; at the same moment turning with a frank and generous countenance, to receive and repay the greetings of the knights and nobles who crowded from all sides about him.

Audeley, from his stand beneath the Queen's gallery, had been an anxious witness of Leonard's last struggle, and, recognizing him as

he fell to the ground, had, so soon as the Marshal's award permitted his interference, stepped forth to give him aid ; he now, assisted by the ready Hawkwood, replaced the cervelliere, which having burst its lacing, had fallen from its owner's head ; and, this done, led the way through the enclosed passage, to the palace ; the King's serjeant-at-arms, who had charge of the gate, finding no difficulty in admitting a party under James Audeley's warranty ; behind followed Hawkwood, with the page and esquire of Sir Gervais de Wilton, the latter marvelling vastly who it was they had thus tended, in their master's coat.

Arrived at the house, Audeley gave directions that Leonard's horse should be well cared for, and after, in so short a time as might be, led round to the back-front of the palace.

“ Fear not,” cried Hawkwood, “ since I will see Soldan well done by ; and I pray you, Master Leonard, to depart not before I can fetch my own beast hither, which will

not take long ; I left him but at the back of the Mayor's gallery, in charge of one of the runners, who I know."

Leonard held out his hand to the honest fellow, and this greeting over, followed Audeley within the apartment he called his own.

"Welcome!" cried the latter, after having seated themselves, and for a minute drawn free breath, "welcome, mine ancient opposer, you have again borne you right well, and with your accustomed fortune. I swear by heavens I could envy this day, had it fallen to any but yourself—but come, drink now, and wash from your throat the dust of the *mélée*."

Pure wine of Gascony, and still purer water, were quickly served to them, and Leonard gladly and freely slaked his thirst with the welcome beverage ; thus refreshed, he doffed his borrowed plumage, and giving the stained surcoat and cervelliere to Sir Gervais de Wilton's page, accompanied with ample largess, he next resumed his own unsullied

garniture, having at the same time, as well as might be, those parts of his armour adjusted which were shaken out of place.

Leonard during these arrangements made but short answer to his host's warm-hearted courtesies, for, in truth, his mind was overwhelmed by the strange events which had, in the last few hours, so rapidly succeeded each other, making him, as it seemed, in that short day live years of ordinary existence. He felt that he stood no longer where the grey dawn of morning had found him; his fate was at last decided to his wish, and this without his own seeking; the career was now opened to him for which he had sighed so long, and as he deemed vainly sighed; for his uncle's objections he felt assured would not for a moment be raised in opposition to the King's wish; nor would his prejudices be now violated, since the auspicious manner of his introduction to arms must, of reason, rather flatter than wound the pride of his tenacious relative.

These and such like recollections of the

past came quick upon him, happily mingling with brighter imaginings for the future ; in all of which the morning's adventure, the stranger maiden, and her probable destination after her coming interview with the King, bore no mean share ; whilst more shadow like did the speaking eyes and the pale melancholy brow which met his half bewildered glance from within that latticed gallery, as he rose from the ground, again appear before his eyes ; together with the wild look, and wilder scream, which, despite the high excitement of that minute, had thrilled through his veins, and to recall which yet agitated his every nerve, he knew not wherefore, since the whole passage rose but to his memory like an ill-minded dream.

More than once the words of enquiry as to the tenant of that place were on his lips as he conversed with Audeley, but as often as the desire arose it was suppressed, either by some inward dictation of prudence or ill defined fear of the subject.

Within a short time the loud clang of approaching music, ascending from without, warned them that the King was, with the Court, returning to the palace to prepare with all speed for the progress to the City, and served to remind Leonard of the necessity of hastening his own departure. Summoning a page in waiting, Audeley directed him to see Leonard's horse prepared and led round to the northern tower ; and this done, he still most kindly insisted upon attending him there.

It was the same tower beneath which, scarce two hours before, he had passed with such very different feelings. Then, led under the haughty conduct of the proud Chamberlain, he came to be, perchance, sneered at, and then contumeliously dismissed ; now he passed in companionship with a noble youth, whose equal and kind bearing scarce left the sensitive Leonard conscious of the gulf between their several states.

His own spirits too were changed, and his

heart sat prouder and lighter within ; for, had he not been chosen by his King to ride at his side and strike in the same battle ?

In this altered mood then did our now pleased citizen retrace his steps to the entrance of the great northern tower, towards which, at the moment of his arrival, a groom approached, holding the unwearied Soldan, who, on being halted, struck with untamed foot the ground, as impatient of delay or heavy restraint, as when the morning's first sun lighted him from his stable ; close after also came Hawkwood gallantly bestriding his recovered nag, whose drooping ears and tremulous tail bespoke him to have had little respite and less tending since the morning.

After some commendations of his horse, and many words of encouragement for himself, Leonard was here taken leave of by his right noble and gentle friend, who, rising superior to the age's prejudice, on finding in this humble youth a kindred spirit worthy

higher fortune, stood not aloof to coldly watch his struggle with adverse fate, but at once and freely stretched forth his hand to help to raise him. Audeley had, in fact, been much interested by Leonard's gallant and generous bearing on the occasion of the joust at Smithfield, of which mention has been made, and at that period had inwardly resolved not to lose sight of one whose native gentlesse was so conspicuous ; but he had, on the day after, quitted London for the North, and soon after that had been attacked by the *pest*, as the malady so destructive, both at this time and again a few years later, was aptly named.

From the debilitating effects of this foul fever he was not, in fact, at this time quite recovered, but had, nevertheless, ventured to Court, lured by the tempting news of a series of warlike shows purposed by the King, of which this day was considered but the prelude.

Having explained thus much, we will now leave James Audeley to make hasty prepara-

tion for his place in the gaily plumed throng which gathered round the royal presence, in order to follow the footsteps of our hero, Leonard, as we may now venture to call him ; who, together with his warm hearted and well pleased follower, rode briskly towards the ferry of Blackfriars, by crossing at which they purposed avoiding the route of the procession, well judging that it was by this time with difficulty kept clear of the impatient and excited populace.

Onward then they pressed in the proposed direction, but not wholly unattended in their way, for there was one laid on their track, whose senses, quickened by wonder and strong apprehension mingled, were not to be easily eluded ; in the present instance the task of the spy was an easy one indeed, since the parties dogged were careless as they were unsuspecting.

“ A rare sleight thou hast passed on me to day, my fair master,” observed Hawkwoood, breaking a silence somewhat prolonged for

his ease, as side by side they now dashed across the common in the direction of St. George's Fields, whose many lofty windmills stretching forth their great arms in the distance, made no ill landmarks.

“ I aimed not at any sleight, Gilbert, be satisfied ; if, as I conjecture, thou art glancing at my this morning’s avowal, as being opposed to my now presence here ; the which is, in sooth, almost as strange to me as it must doubtless appear to you.”

“ Nay, I accuse thee not of absolute cheater-y, intended and contrivedly practised,” interrupted Hawkwood, in a voice half sulky, half good-humoured, “ since, hadst thou intended to be here, there was little reason in dismissing one, who would have ridden by thy side to the full as stoutly as they that did, if not altogether so trimly bedight ; but the simple truth is, Len, thou dost not o’ late know thine own mind any two following minutes in the day ; thou art as wayward in thy fancy as a young butterfly on a May-thorn

fresh blown, and as restless ; and I'll wager, that by the time we are gotten to this ferry, which we now seek in such haste, thou art as likely as not to turn about, and with more wisdom resolve to take thy place in the returning pageant, as 'tis fitting thou shouldst. Marry I'd laugh to see Rawlins, or any other there, seek to dispute place with thee after all that's past ; the which even yet seems to me that saw it, a wonder almost passing eye-credit."

" Scarcely less seems it to me !" exclaimed Leonard, involuntarily ; then, quickly checking himself, continued, " but, nevertheless, trust me thou shalt not this bout lose labour, since, God willing, we will surely cross by this ferry, and at no point else. To what end I continue to evade my place in this throng, for the which I see thy spirit longs, may not be told to any ; but again I say, Gilbert Hawkwood, lose not thou all sight of this show, which will doubtless be so brave and

worthy remembrance ; but turn thy horse's head, and leave me to proceed my way alone."

" And again I answer, Master Leonard *Borgia*, leave you alone I will not until ye be safe housed in *Lombard-street*, or wherever else ye make for so fast. Marry I twice to-day followed your counsel in this, and well you were like to speed for it both first and last ; since, albeit you may know it not, those summer knaves that tended after you in the lists were all too slow in their paces to have much aided you in that press ; and had it not been for foot and hand of mine, though I say it of myself, poor Soldan here would a'bin lamed past cure, since they knew not the trick of catching him ; for he twice tried to jump over the lower barrier, despite the staves of the Constable's men, and the bungling tricks of those lack-wit 'squires of thine."

" But by what means didst thou know of my presence, where it could never, in reason, have been expected, and strangely coated as I was ? "

“ Ha, ha, think ye I’m sand blind, Len ?
No, no, hawk’s eyes are not to be closed by a
hood of cobweb; I could a’ sworn to Soldan’s
step at a glance, for all his changed contoise,
and after that, I looked not twice more to tell
again the *fashion of thy rare Milan harness of*
steel, gold-watered, though the surcoat was of
another colour. Knew I not, past question,
the odd make of thy rounded pauldrons, with
their bosses of gilded heads, and thy new fan-
gled solerets as well ; having joints of plate
over the instep, whilst all others there, had
gussets of mail between the jamb and the foot ;
besides, Len, although I would not have thee
overly vain of my praise, I fancied I somehow
knew thy seat in saddle, and thy bearing
amongst the best there, and so fancying, kept
ever after a close look-out, and lost no motion
of thine, till thou wert grappled, unawares,
by that Roman knight ; whose name I mind
not, though, by my faith, ‘twas loudly shouted
enough, for all cried ‘ Well done !’ when he
nipped you off horse so clean and cunning-

ly—marry I turned stone cold at the sight, and, despite the Constable's knaves, slipped at once out under the *fausse lists*, and bolted straight through into the *mélée*.

“ St. George, Len, but thou didst rarely tackle him, that I will say, when he sought to cast thee, like a sack o' grains, to the ground, right 'aneath the place where sat all the Court dames, and Queen Philippa herself. I knew, despite all his cunning, thou wert safe enough, that moment I saw thou hadst wit and strength left to grip him so manfully ; and after followed close at his vexed beast's heels, 'till the horse ridded him fairly o' ye both together.”

“ But how,” enquired Leonard, “ did you contrive to win so good a place, or get at all within the *fausse lists* ?”

“ Marry, Len,” answered Hawkwood, with a knowing wink, “ even, as they say, most good places are won at Court, by a bull's face an eel's body, and a serpent's tongue ; I brazened, wriggled, and lied, until, aided by my

holiday coat, I got fairly inside, whiles many, with less impudence and more honesty, who had a better right to place, were left to stand in the press."

"Thou art an unblushing and most shameless varlet," cried Leonard, laughing heartily at this unminced avowal: "yet, Gilbert, am I glad, even by such means, thou wert there, a witness of the glorious sport; the chance of which will, with God's help, I hope, soon guide me other service, more to my fancy than has been my late office of watching my uncle's craftsmen over their piece labour; and blinding mine eyes in seeing that they pilfered not the glittering dross, they toiled to fashion after the models born of the old man's cunning brain. Oh, how often and again have I striven to bend my mind to the task, until, loathing and spirit-sick, I have fled, cursing my wanton idleness, yet unable to curb the master passion ever kindling within me, and which, I hope, may now be honestly gratified! for will not •

the royal Edward himself be my advocate to my uncle—and he cannot plead in vain."

"I heard the King's words," cried Hawkwood, here breaking in on the pleasant anticipations of his wrapt companion—"he is going to make you one of his esquires; and the saints speed us both to serve him well and truly, say I! for, do thou mark my words, Len Borgia, when there comes next a war, and you ride with the King's company, Gill Hawkwood won't be many spear-lengths after. I hate the shop-board, cloth, and needle, as much to the full as thou canst cup and graver, and with more reason, since thou hast had thine own will and wrought little or none, whilst I have been kept cross-legged, will ye nil ye, till I am well nigh lamed to the shambling tailorly gait of old Watts himself; who, but for love of thee, and a regard of thy counsel, I had before now brained with his own goose, and fled to seek my fortune over seas; where, as one may hear, there are ever good

blows going, and cheerful welcome for all that bring but a free will and a heavy hand. Nay, look not so grave-faced, Len, I seek not thy counsel or thy aid in this ; but will henceforth deal as best suits the time and my humour, and leave the rest to come after, as it surely will."

They were by this time arrived near the ferry of the Black Friars ; and here arose an unforeseen difficulty to oppose their further passage, since, although the old Charon willingly put forward his own service to transport their persons across the Thames, he declared it out of his power to bring from its moorings the heavy horse-boat, or, without skilful help, manage it after. His sons, he said, were gone to the show ; and the coming of horsemen to cross by this quiet, out-o'-the-world way, on such a day, being quite unexpected, was unprovided for.

What was to be done ? There was no other ferry nearer than Lambeth, only that belonging to the Temple, which, being private, had

no boat stationed on this side, save when needed by some of the knights. Whilst Leonard stood here, indeterminate whether to quit his horse to Hawkwood's care, cross alone, and so proceed on foot—which the weight of his armour, and the probable state of the streets rendered objectionable enough—or at once to push westward for Lambeth ferry, a couple of horsemen came up on the same errand, and, on being informed where the difficulty lay, at once proffered their aid to remove it.

“I'll shew thee, Herman, how we may manage here, easily enough, with thy help,” said the seeming superior, addressing his companion, who had the appearance of a nobleman's retainer of the ordinary class, whilst the speaker might be a personage of consequence in some great household—for he was half armed, in excellent harness, wore a crimson feather in his cap-band, and bestrode a capital horse.

“Thou canst well help to guide a boat,” continued the first speaker—on the man's pro-

fessing his readiness—"so come, off saddle, and lend the old man a hand to put this knight across, if he will permit me a place in his company; and that done, thou canst return, and take my horse back to my lord's, whilst I make my way on foot to Warwick House, from whence I shall, I doubt not, find company to the Guildhall."

Leonard accepted with thanks the ready aid of the courteous stranger; and by their joint exertions the horse-boat was, notwithstanding the predictions of the old ferryman to the contrary, fairly brought as near the shore as was necessary, freighted without accident or delay, and launched into the stream. It was now about the first of flood-tide, when the currents are nearly balanced, so that, with the good help of the stranger's servant, who was evidently an adept in the matter; backed by the willing, though less practised hand of Hawkwood, they moved bravely over the mighty stream, till arriving at mid-way, they involun-

tarily forbore the labour to turn their eyes towards the gay scene which the distant bridge presented, together with the gaudy decorations of the many vessels at anchor in the line of the drawbridges, passing the open spaces of which, the glittering of the pageant might be seen. They had small time for many words on the passage, since all were too busily employed to talk ; but, once restored to land, Leonard paused to thank the cavalier, to whose timely help he stood so much indebted.

“ You are most welcome,” replied the stranger : “ we have so far helped each the other, as best beseems Christians and gentlemen ; and now suffer me, I pray you, to walk between your horses so far as we proceed hence by the same way together, since, if we meet any great throng, I may thus pass the quicker through it, time being rather closely measured out to me.”

“ Willingly,” answered Leonard ; “ nay, we are bound to give you safe escort, and will

freely, so your way lies not over far out of mine own, since I, too, am somewhat pressed by time."

" It needs not," said the stranger, " if you pass City-ways at all, you cannot fail to bring me far enough on my road to render it easy after." He now turned to his attendant, giving him directions to recross the river, and ride immediately back with the cattle, adding, in a manner peculiarly significant—" and tell my lord, honest Herman, that the errand I am upon, fully sped, he shall after, at the soonest, see me : be mindful of my words, and so speed thou back."

The two horsemen rode onward together, accompanied by the stranger, and met small interruption, save from a few craving May-day-like dancers, of a juvenile kind; who were encouraged, but vainly, in this effort to divide the attention of the populace; the numbers of their followers were scanty, and composed chiefly of decrepid age or timid childhood, for all that London held of youth and vigour was

congregated on the line of the King's march, and, had the Chepe conduit already ran wine, as at night it was yet to do, 'tis doubtful if the announcement would have won many deserters from the royal train.

On their arriving near the top of Ludgate-street, the stranger, after taking leave of his escort, turned suddenly to the left and disappeared, as he had told them was his intention, in the direction of Warwick House.

“ And wilt thou not seek to win a place at the feast, neither, Leonard ? ” demanded Hawkwood, as freed from the restraint of a third person's presence, they rode onward together.

“ I do not purpose again to leave home this even, being once well and safely housed,” replied Leonard calmly.

“ Humph ! ” continued Hawkwood, “ again in thy moods ? Well, thou art past my fathoming, Len, so I'll go to the Guildhall for thee, and try an I cannot win a peep. I'll feast mine eyes at least with his Grace, or it shall go hard ; and, as I purpose well lining

my doublet out of thy uncle's buttery, before hand—that is, with your help, and his good leave—I shall be in so much more forward than the best alderman at the feast."

" Well resolved, Gilbert, and spoken like a wise sage and a philosopher, as thou art ; and on the morrow thou shalt bring me full word how the matter was ordered, and ended—always provided thou canst keep staff off thy skull through the night, the which I do much doubt."

Arrived in Lombard street, Leonard found the domestics eagerly on the look out for him at the gate, and indeed the whole family in a most anxious state of expectancy. By his uncle he was warmly greeted, even Hawkwood was more cheerily welcomed, than he was accustomed to be by Messer Andreas ; whilst, by the fair Bertha, his return was hailed by a word and a smile that would, in his mind, have more than repaid him, had he been tasked with the labours of Hercules.

“She hath been little at ease since your depart, and is ill, I fear me exceeding ill,” whispered Borgia confidentially to his nephew, on beholding him start with surprise, after observing the extreme languor and dejection depicted in her most expressive countenance. “I would have had her to bed, and to rest, but in vain, she hath wearied herself with watching for your return ; and would sleep none, naught that she is, and wilful,” added the old man, in her hearing.

“But I will be better advised, and in good time fear not, signior,” exclaimed the maiden, extending both her hands with a sweet smile of thankfulness. “Now I know that my errand is well sped—and I need not words to tell me that—my rest will be calm as the sleep of infancy : am I not a true diviner ?” she added, casting a look full of impatience on her messenger ; who, for his part, struck with her altered appearance, was more deeply occupied in the interest this excited, than with the

ladye's errand, or the King's reply ; the which however, on her again reminding him, he now faithfully rehearsed.

“ Well sped, and quickly, thou trusty herald,” joyfully broke forth the maiden, as he ceased to speak—“ all will yet go well !—my father shall find I am not easily cast down, or tardy of resource, but am endowed with, at the least, a woman's portion of his own undaunted soul !”

She here covered her eyes with her hands, to hide her emotion, whilst the wondering Andreas, who had heard all with open eyes and ears, exclaimed, in the very treble of his voice—

“ Why, Leonard ! how sayest thou, my son?—the King !—King Edward here !—here ! and to-night ?—is it so ?—did I hear right ?—I—I am bewildered now, and shall ne'er be able to make fitting preparation. Stay, call me first Deborah hither, I must—”

“ ’Tis needless, dear sir,” interrupted Leonard, at the same time forcibly arresting the steps of the old man as he hurried outward,

“ any preparation will not only be needless, but methinks unwise as well, since his Grace will come here in disguise, and requires our aid only to keep unknown.”

“ Oh, oh ! is it so then, *caro* ?—may be so—yet, notwithstanding, will I have some preparation made that shall not anger him, trust me. Ha, ha, ha ! he shall not depart wholly empty from the house of old Andreas : the eagle seeks not to rend with his talons filled—I had rather see the King in disguise, than his officers in their holiday coats—one free gift is sweeter than three squeezed loans, and this is a right fair occasion. Oh, oh ! but I am greatly pleased at this hearing—Leonardo, my son, thou wert born under a happy star, and shalt prosper : and comes he—his Grace I mean—here, this—*this* night, of a surety, saidst thou ?”

“ I cannot doubt it,” answered Leonard, unable to refrain a smile ; whilst the nervous old man pursed his mouth, rubbed his hands together, and twisted about his head the black

silk skull-cap he wore; now pulling it down over his brows, then again thrusting suddenly back off his head, as he started quickly to the door, as quickly to come back again, and standing tip-toe before his nephew, to repeat the oft answered question.

“ But this night, this very night ! mean’st thou, Leonardo ?”

“ His Grace was most positive in his announced intention, and, as I think, was far too earnest to forget or change his purpose.”

“ He will not change it, I feel well assured,” here added Bertha, smiling languidly, at the odd manner of the bewildered and pleased old man, who, at this confirmation of his desires, sprung forward, exclaiming—

“ I had no hopes of this, but I believe it—I will now believe it, and right joyful am I, since happy are they who win favour in the King’s eyes—oh ! ’tis long, long since I have seen the light of his.

“ When his royal and tasteful mother, my bounteous mistress, sat in her place of power,

we were not unfriends : then, many a bright bezant have I given to the fair-haired boy, our present noble King ; and still would he come to meet old Andreas, who, well he knew, came seldom empty-handed ;—ha, ha ! a bell for his hawk, or a new fashioned buckle for his dagger-belt, would then well content him. But the troubles came, evil tongues were thrust between Edward and his mother's servant ; I was said to have supplied the power of Mortimer with monies—alas ! my gratitude to my Queen, who had no fault to me, was made a grievous crime, and I have long expected to pay as heavy a penalty. But Edward is royal, even in his anger, and hitherto I have known it only by his frown, having been in all else left unmolested ; no small favour at a time when many of my friends have been sore mulcted of their hard gains ; and this with little mercy or justice on the part of the rude enforcers and ministers of the King's decree, the which in itself I will not dispute.

“ But he comes, once again he comes under

the same roof, and I will, I doubt not—with a little pains-taking, late as it is, find the way to appease the remains of his anger, and blot out of his remembrance the foul-tongued rumours that have abused his ear, and done me wrong.

“I must now therefore perforce leave you, fair daughter of the noble Artevelde; but sit you not alone, for that is cheerless; here is Leonardo, my son, he shall be your chamber groom, and no dullard wilt thou find him; trust me he reads freely and with a clerkly readiness; and moreover, with no rude voice sings to the touch of his own finger on the mandolin.—So, Caro Leo, do thou use all pains to drive care from this dear maiden’s brow—whiles I retire and strive to bethink me reasonably, for I am bewildered, and unfit for any but my own companionship. Now rest and compose thee, daughter of mine, and for a season fare ye well.”

CHAPTER V.

AFTER the aged gold-worker left the chamber, the maiden spoke not ; and it was not until some minutes had elapsed thus unbroken, that the young man ventured to say—“ My kind kinsman has, I fear, imposed but a weary companion on your patience, ladye, therefore with your good leave, I will provide you with better recreation than may be found in dull company.”

Leonard, whilst speaking, drew from off a carefully curtained shelf, a newly bound manuscript of a rare and costly appearance, and with an air of deep respect, placed it on a small

table which he drew close to the couch occupied by Bertha. " You will," he continued, " find within these spelled leaves, your surest champion against loneliness or dulness. I know not if you have already seen this, since 'tis but new from Rome, having been received some weeks back from my uncle's correspondent, Messer Collignati, himself the friend of Signor Petrarca, and as all men must be, enamoured of his genius."

" My father's care has already made the verses of Petrarca known to me," replied Bertha; " yet do they, like the oft welcomed spring, come ever fresh as at first, and as cheering to the senses—indeed I thank you, and will not urge on you your kinsman's command, since you are, doubtless, weary and in need of rest—but—"

The maiden paused suddenly here, as if endeavouring to mete her words by the compass of courtesy, and yet fearful to trust her tongue with the task. Leonard was also silent for a moment, before, catching her embarrassment,

he made a reply ; which he at length did in a hurried and low tone, and with an increasing action of each pulse, that subdued and surprised him.

“ Ah ! ladye, dare I say that in your presence I find no touch of weariness ?—dare I tell you how long I could wait here, to look upon your face, and hearken to your voice, and only in their absence dream of pain ?—But, pardon me, I am too rude, my lips too free ; my tongue unmanaged, and over loud to be entrusted with the fashioning of my inbred thoughts ; which, could I lay them all bare before you, ladye, trust me would do me less disfavour in your mind, and be less startling than my words are to your gentle hearing.”

The maiden replied not, but followed with her eyes his footsteps as they receded towards the distant door ; through this he was slowly passing before she found voice to arrest his step, so sudden, so startling had been the passion exhibited in his last few incoherent sentences, which, though conveyed in a tone

low and touchingly gentle, shewed its hidden source to lie very deep, and to be, though yet restrained, both full and strong.

“ You will come back then ? ” she at length said, with an equality of voice and composure of manner, which women, aye and young ones too, are often able best to assume, when they feel it least, and than which, nothing can be so freezing to a passionate, sensitive, and inexperienced boy.

“ You will return anon, and let me be judge of the lute, whose tone your kinsman rated so highly ? ”

“ I will prepare my mandolin, and have it ready, when it may please you call for it,” replied Leonard, as bowing low, he closed the door, whilst the young Bertha threw her head back upon the pillow of her couch, and with the manuscript of Petrarcha raised above, read or seemed to read.

Leonard meantime hurried to his chamber, and with the aid of honest Cyril, soon exchanged his warlike harness for the less imposing habiliments of peace; being in his choice of garments

on this occasion hard to please, and difficult to a degree that sorely puzzled his plain attendant ; equipped at length, if not to his satisfaction, he dismissed Cyril, and seated himself to reflect ; but not on the brilliant scene of his lucky triumph at Kennington, not on the cheering words of the King, or on the long desired career now opening before him did he dwell ; no, his reflections were confined to one subject alone, and that subject was *woman*.

“ She is cold,” he said, half aloud, after having inwardly repeated her last words.—“ Yes, she too is cold and proud of heart, as all who have to do with courts are. O ! that one so young, so fresh, so gentle, should be so winter breath’d ; her voice, as she called to me, sounded like that proud woman’s, whose public scorn yet rankles in my heart, and in a moment changed the warm current of my veins to ice ; but I well merited her smile of scorn, fool and presumer that I am, what had I done that I should so venture to loose on her my clown-like admiration ?—on her ! a being so courtly, and

unaccustomed to such forwardness?—was it because I did that on her behalf, which my own grooms had freely ventured for aught of woman-kind, that I so babbled in her offended hearing?—No, no, I will not think that, so I should hate myself; let me, however, dream no more, but learn world wisdom, and curb my tongue to silence, though my heart should throb to bursting, since that I feel to be already past my masterdom.”

Pressing his hand against the seat of these roused feelings, he rose, and opening the narrow casement, leaned from it; greedily courting the cool breeze of evening, and manfully striving to dissipate his darker fancies by catching at the cheerful huzzas from without, which spoke a people’s welcome of the King they loved.

Alas! with what light trifles is young blood made mad, when woman’s gentlest breath is storm enough to wake its rage, and lash it into fury!

How different a construction would a few years experience in such gear, have taught our hero to place upon that maiden’s words, and

altered manner ; her soft sweet look, so unrestrainedly pleased, as she listened—breathlessly listened, whilst his passion spoke so plainly, and his eloquent glance revealed all that was left undefined by words ; her after-silence, her air so statue-like, roused only by his retreat ; and, as she bade him return, her well assumed tone of cold indifference, so opposite to her manner, and so little in unison with the gratitude she must naturally feel for one, to whom she owed so much : these, and many other signs less palpable, but all as sure, which may be caught from an intercepted ray of the tell-tale eye ; heard in an aspiration from the heart, too light to pierce the grosser atmosphere without ; gleaned from the unconscious quiver of a lip, head turned, or finger stirred ;—all these, we say, could not, if wisely read, have failed to give better omen, and to have inspired happier thoughts. As it was, however, Leonard felt on sore ill terms with himself ; and finding his reveries still wandering to the same subject, he suddenly left his solitude, and betook him to the stable, in order to console himself in the socie-

ty of his good horse ; to which end, had he been somewhat older, he would probably have first betaken him to his bottle : the present remedy, however, wrought present cure ; and from hence, in compliance with Gilbert Hawkwood's counsel, most interestedly given, he further betook him, albeit with an indifferent appetite, to the evening meal, which honest Deborah, with a shrill tongue, announced as fully prepared, and awaiting their attack.

Supper over, Leonard devoted a reasonable time to his light-hearted companion's recapitulations of the events of the day ; then saw him, after being well catered for, depart for the Guild-hall, determined to try fortune in a venture to obtain a peep, at least, on the night's feast, together with the rare company assembled there.

Messer Andreas was absent from home, and had, as it appeared, left no word as to the time of his return—a thing unusual with him : evening slowly wore to night, yet was it not until long after darkness had rendered lights needful, that Leonard summoned courage enough

to anticipate the call of his uncle's fair guest, and desire that these necessaries might be taken to her apartment; with a postscript-like request, delivered in the manner of an after-thought, that he might be allowed to appear before her; a request which was, on Deborah's return from her mission, answered in the affirmative; or, to give it in the old dame's flattering words—"The young damsel will be right over-joyed to see thee, honey Leonard; and to hear thy music also, I fancy, for she said some word o' that as well, but I mind me not rightly what."

Leonard quickly did as commanded; and on entering once again within the young ladye's chamber, was well pleased to hear, in answer to his somewhat too formally made enquiry, that she had slept, and was now better, and more at ease.

What length of time passed over whilst this pair rested thus alone together, not being on record, we know not; nor could they, if so questioned, have replied with much greater exactness, since Leonard was somewhat suddenly,

and as he fancied soon interrupted, in we know not which of his virelays; for in truth he sang well enough, being once heard, to be permitted short pause whilst in company with one, passionately fond of music, such as his; and who was moreover, becoming every minute more puzzled how else to fill up the time whilst so companioned.

It was Martha Bartlet, the young hand-maiden of the household, who entering thus uncalled for, marred a gentle ditty. She had in fact usurped in this intrusion, the function of her elders, in order to satisfy her raised curiosity with a look on the strange young maiden; of whose marvellous beauty her sweetheart, Jocelin, had been so full of praise; hardly, however, had she thrust her own round rosy face within the doorway, when Leonard turned about on her, and sharply, we will not say angrily, demanded her errand.

“Here be some strange folk would fain ha' speech with my master,” answered the confused lass, with a curtsy.

“Doubtless, it is *he*,” whispered Bertha, yet not so low but the sharp-eared Martha caught the words, alive as she was to every motion of the object of her curiosity ; making quick answer therefore, with a second curtsy, she said—“ ‘Tis no *he*, may it please you, mistress, but two women, like ourselves, only smothered up in mantlet and hood, as though they were cold, or ashamed to shew face, of which there can be small need in an honest dwelling like this.”

“Women !” cried the young ladye.

“Women !” echoed Leonard, and seeking concealment—“Oh, ‘tis some mistake of this witless wench.”

“Not so witless, but I can tell a woman from a man when I ha’ my eyes open,” interposed Martha, in quick vindication of her impeached discernment.

“And whither have you shewn these strangers, who desire to speak with mine uncle ?”

“Why, I’ll tell you, Master Leonard, they shewed me, I may say, since they went before;

entering the first place they found open, which was the great front chamber, next the hall door—as we passed by this, they heard you a singing, and stopped, and so listened, till one on 'em broke in with some words o' sorrow ; and so loudly, that her companion suddenly drew her away onward : and I went after, afeard that you might catch us playing at long-ears by the door here ; which I then thought not over decent, and might mayhap ha' said as much ; but marry there is one o' the pair seems more fond to order than listen ; and she it was hastened me back here to say, speech of my master they *must* needs have, and quickly.”

“ How came they within the house, that they passed this door ? ” enquired Leonard.

“ Why, by the yard, to be sure ; how else ? ” replied Martha. “ I was just talking by the yard gate, with Jos, and listening to the bellowing that came from Chepe Conduit and thereaway—whither he wanted, right or wrong, to go, like a fool as he is, never well under a whole bonnet—when up comes this two, with

a man that bides yet outside, and in as short speech as you please, they order me to bring them ben the house, which I ha' done ; so now you know all, and as master is not within, I can easy bid them come back at a more fitting time."

"I will first see these mysterious visitors of my uncle's, with your leave ?" said Leonard, addressing Bertha ; then desiring Martha to lead the way, he followed to the chamber where she had left the strangers.

Abiding in the hall till the girl made mention of his coming, and was herself withdrawn, Leonard entered within the large half-furnished room ; at the farther end, by the dim light of the common lamp which stood upon the table, he observed two apparently female figures, closely cloaked and hooded, having nothing about their appearance to distinguish them from ordinary travellers, desirous of escaping close observation.

The one, however, was evidently greatly wrought on, from some cause or other, and

was seated on a low bench near the wall; whilst the other was as plainly employed in endeavours to calm the mind of the mourner; for it was easy to hear whispered words of remonstrance and encouragement as she bent over the object of her concern.

Leonard, after observing this scene for a moment, slowly advanced towards the group in question, until checked by a hasty repulsive motion of the hand, made by the person who was standing, in obedience to which he halted where he stood; and, after another short pause, demanded, if in the absence of his uncle, it was in his power to pleasure those whom he addressed?

His words seemed at once to rouse the sunken frame of the already much moved, seated figure, for, sharply lifting her head from off her knees, where, till this moment she had kept it buried, she uttered a few hurried sentences in a passionate accent; seeking, as she spoke, to throw back the deep hood in which her head was enveloped; but this attempt was opposed by her attentive companion,

who spared neither word nor action to restrain and compose her.

“ For the love of heaven,” the latter hurriedly exclaimed, “ be more tranquil, and better guarded, or you are lost. What would you do, and on a mere fanciful surmise that may, after all, be proved false, as it is at present too vague and shadowy for any thing beyond hope.”

Leonard caught no reply to this, and further less loud remonstrance ; save the monosyllable, “ no, no, no, no,” many times repeated, hysterically, and with increasing energy and rapidity.

“ Good youth,” hastily exclaimed the female, whom we will distinguish as “ the friend,” herself much agitated, “ retire but to the door for a moment, until I find some way to calm one, whose mind you see is so bitterly afflicted ; stir not away from thence till you hear my call, for our stay here must be brief, and I may have some words to say to you.”

What argument that calmer woman used

to her passion-wrought friend, was never known to Leonard; but before many minutes were elapsed, the door was re-opened, and by the same deep voice at whose command he had quitted the chamber, he was now as pre-emptorily bid to re-enter: he did so, closing the door and following his conductress; who passed with a lofty air across the floor, and, seating herself beside her friend, took her passive hand on to her lap, between both her own, and motioned Leonard to a seat before her; next enquiring, in a tone of indifference—

“ Will Messer Borgia be long absent, think you ? ”

“ His absence, I think, will not now be much prolonged,” answered Leonard, “ although I cannot say this advisedly, since I know not whither he is gone.”

“ You stand in some relation to him, do you not ? ” said the questioner, pursuing her enquiry carelessly.

“ I am his nephew.”

“ His sister's son ? ”

“ His brother's son.”

“ Is your mother living here?”

“ Alas ! no !—she does not live.”

“ And your father—is he yet living?”

Leonard shook his head ; but, ere his lips could move in answer, the silent stranger anticipated his reply ; and, echoing his former words, in a voice of bitter grief exclaimed—
“ Alas ! alas !—no ! no ! no !”

“ For God's loye be more composed,” quickly whispered the adviser, pressing within her own the little hand which she retained. At this moment a loud knocking was heard upon the outer door. Leonard started on to his feet, and listened anxiously.

“ Here, doubtless, comes your kinsman,” added the last speaker, turning towards him.

“ I think no,” returned Leonard, half involuntarily, as he attentively approached the door ;—but before he could half reach this, he heard a well-remembered voice exclaim—

“ No doubt then these be they I seek ; so, mistress, by your leave.” At the same

instant the door was pushed open, and the King stalked quickly into the middle of the chamber ; throwing his bonnet on the table, and tossing back his hood, he was about to make some demand, when a scream from both the females, arrested the words upon his lip.

“ Why what’s there, in the name of marvel ? ” cried the King, glancing curiously through the gloom, towards the two figures, who had risen in surprise at his abrupt entrance, and yet stood in evident agitation.

“ Your pardon,” said Leonard, advancing to the King’s side ; “ but she whom you seek is not here ; with your leave I will conduct you to her.”

“ Your pardon, fair sir,” merrily interrupted the King. “ So you have masquers here ! but what, in the name of wonder, so scared these coy ones, here ? I ever held myself a comely than other, and am accounted in the City as well to look on as my fellows ; yet, here, a half glance sets these good dames, or damsels

—for, not being in the secret, so hooded, 'tis hard to guess which they are—screaming in downright fear, as though they had seen a forked tail, or cleft hoof, under my woollen gown."

"It was surprise, not terror, honest master," said Leonard, humouring the assumption of the King, "these dames impatiently await my uncle's coming, and looked to meet him when you so suddenly entered ; they are in deep sorrow, and hearts wherein sits sorrow are easily shaken : now, an it please ye, follow me ; I will conduct you to her you seek, and who expects you impatiently."

"The sooner so the better," replied the King ; "meantime, let me crave pardon of your guests, be they lily fair, or homelier brown ; be their estate maid, wife, or widow—for the interruption I have been ; which may be forgiven, since there were three in company ; had ye been happily paired, the intrusion had merited death by the axe ; give ye both good even."

With this, following Leonard out of the cham-

ber, he continued, laying hold of his shoulder, “hah, rogue ! what new mission art thou conning from fair lips? to break in with on our rest, and drag us from a revel, where all else remain sworn to joy and jollity—come, who are these mysterious silent angels, who, I think, knew our person ?”

“Your Grace must credit my word, when I reply, strange though it may appear, I know not, having seen only so much of their persons as you have been favoured with.”

“But their errand here ?”

“Is with my uncle, who is absent.”

“Hem, your uncle—doubtless you'll be found to do as well.”

Arrived before the door they sought, Leonard requested permission to pass within, and announce to the maiden the coming of the King, and to this effect was yet speaking, when Edward himself entered. Bertha timidly advanced a few steps, and kneeled before him, when he courteously raised her up, and saluting her forehead, led her back to the couch—then

turning to Leonard, who yet stood near the door, a much interested observer, said—

“ Now leave us, young Borgia ; be mindful to keep careful watch, and see that we are not broken in upon, till I call without.”

Leonard silently obeyed, and withdrew from the presence ; for the first time in his life, envying royalty its privileges, and with a half-feeling that, had he possessed the power, he should have been much inclined, unreasonable though it might appear, on this occasion, to have disputed the command just given.

He returned straight to the chamber wherein he had left the stranger women, to find them all anxiety to be gone ; he represented that his uncle could not now remain much longer absent, and begged they would abide his coming, but in vain.

“ We will find some fitter time to see your uncle,” said the hitherto speaker, “ for the present, conduct us, I pray you, hence, by the way we came ; we have one awaiting us at your gate, and once there are safe.”

“ Doubt not your present security, if it please you to remain—I will assure you—but be it as you wish,” he added, observing an impatient sign of dissent from the more active person; conducting them in silence to the end of the passage, he here called to Martha, and to her keeping consigned his charge, not choosing himself to lose sight of the chamber where the King was, lest his uncle, entering by the front door, might unconsciously intrude.

“ We thank you heartily,” said the speaking dame, in reply to Leonard’s excuses for not going further with them; at the same time gently pressing within her hand his arm, as she passed onwards, whilst her silent companion, half turning, made a movement as if to approach, extending at the same time her hands towards him; but suddenly arresting this action, the more active and circumspect friend hurried her along, leaving Leonard somewhat perplexed at this new marvel, as quickly to be succeeded by yet more stirring matter; for,

whilst pacing the hall, or entry so called, and yet ruminating on this and the preceding passages of this eventful day, his abstraction was in a moment dissipated by an unusual bustle from the direction of the court-yard ; and before his roused attention had more than determined this point, he was further startled by the terrified voice of Martha Bartlet, calling aloud for help !

In an instant he was in the kitchen, against the door of which the stout wench had placed her shoulder, and, aided by the elder groom, was busily employed in drawing-to the bolts.

“ Why, what cry is here, Cyril ? ” demanded Leonard, as he hastily entered, his ears being, as he spoke, saluted with many cries from without, mingled with repeated demands for admittance.

“ I know not, rightly, ” answered the man, “ but here’s Martha says, she was but now chased by two or three across the yard ; whilst many more were coming in at the gate, out of which she had but just passed the two dames

that had speech with you : more I know not, for I was asleep by the fire, when her cries wakened me.”

This story the frightened wench, amidst new interruptions, hastily confirmed.

Leonard could only account for the affair by supposing it the work of some officious meddler, who, observing the King enter in here, chose to raise a false alarm of danger : at a loss how to act toward the intruders, who were yet in fierce argument without, he was on the point of slipping back to make Edward himself aware of the raised cry, when new and ruder sounds arose, amidst which he distinguished his uncle’s voice, crying loudly—“ Nay, hold, good sirs, assail not me—I am Messer Borgia, and seek but to enter within my own dwelling.”

“ Seize him, I say, and bind him fast—he is also one tainted and infect !” was next bawled out, in the positive tone of authority, whilst high over all rose the voice of Hawkwood, calling rapidly, “ Jos, good lad, fell me these

knaves that keep me pinn'd here like a trussed hen, and we'll soon make work for them all ! Cry out for Cyril—Leonard—ho !” the concluding sentence was evidently broken by a renewed struggle: on conviction of which, Leonard hastily opened the door, when he beheld, by the light of the torches some carried, a dozen fellows engaged with Jocelin and one other man; and Hawkwood, with his arms pinioned, yet employing three or four to keep him down, as, thrown on the steps, he kicked and bit at those about that sought to gag him to silence, bawling out at intervals—“ Well done, Jos—lay on stoutly, blue gown, whoever ye be—oh that Leonard were but with us !”

“ How is this ?—What rogues' ruffle is here ?” cried Leonard, stepping, with bared weapon, into the middle of the struggle, just as Jocelin and the stranger were disarmed and seized.

“ Master Leonard Borgia,” exclaimed an authoritative looking portly man, wearing the

gown of a marshal of the watch, "render your sword, in the King's name, I charge ye; and yield all the City's lawful prisoners."

"Prisoner!" exclaimed Leonard, coolly, "on whose authority, and of what am I accused?"

"He lies in his gullet, Len," here shouted Hawkwood, struggling for free speech, "thou wilt know that he lies as I—ug-gle—gug—gug—" the strong hand was once more successful, and poor Gilbert was again silent.

"Messieurs," here timidly interposed old Borgia, himself, "come within my house, since ye truly be of the watch, and not make such open riot here; or presently, on this night of misrule, we shall have the gates forced, and our place sacked and spoiled, no man knows wherefore or for what."

Much to the horror of Leonard, who could yet form no clue to the true cause of the present rough interference of the officials, this proposal was acceded to; and they here coolly mounted the steps leading to the kitchen,

preceded by his uncle ; following these into the house; he was enabled to observe that in the Marshal's custody were detained, much to his surprise, the two strange ladies he had so lately parted with, who, on their parts, appeared absolutely petrified by terror. Hawkwood, now formally gagged, was next led, or rather dragged in, together with a strange man, clad in a plain blue hooded gown and large bonnet, whose face was otherwise sufficiently disguised by a wide stream of blood, that continued to flow from a deep cut across his forehead, whilst, last of this group, the sturdy Jocelin was borne along, quite senseless, from the blows he had received in defending his master, and, as he well knew, a rich charge, against what he conceived a preconcerted attack of street robbers.

CHAPTER VI.

ONCE mustered within the limits of the kitchen, Leonard was not slow to discover that the Sergeant Marshal, together with most of his watch, were much flustered, and this from less objectionable excitement, than that raised by the affray just over.

He therefore found little difficulty, during the first confusion of this entry, in making his uncle acquainted with the King's near neighbourhood ; learning, in return, that the old man was deeply cargoed with a store of gold nobles, intended for a peace-offering to his Majesty ; in raising which, his time had

been spent during his absence. Leonard further counselled him, to take occasion to withdraw at the first opportunity, and explain to the King the cause of the tumult; this done, he was busied in arranging seats for the alarmed ladies, when in stalked, or rather waddled, a self-important little Bacchus-like being, wearing a gown of flaming red, most bountifully befringed—who took care no mistake as to his dignity should occur, since he loudly announced himself to be Saul Revel, under-sheriff, and a City magistrate. His non-arrival at the outset was occasioned by his having remained lecturing the Guard at the gate; till he was informed that a peaceable entry had been achieved, when he came, as he said, to countenance his people—certainly to out-countenance every one else.

“ So, honest Master Borgia,” he began, addressing himself to Leonard—“ you’ve been at rare sport—sacrilege—forcible entrance, may be robbery, and possibly murder, for aught we know to the contrary—a pretty free start for a beginner, as one may say !”

“I know not what you mean, Saul Revel,” said Leonard; “and warn you, and all of ye, to be not overguided by this night’s licence, but proceed more guardedly in your handiwork.”

“Had ye hearkened that counsel yourself, we’d a been saved this sore trouble to-night, when all else are enjoying them. In short words, render your bodies, all here, since all are alike infectious, to be placed in the Marshal’s lock-up; there to abide committal on a charge of breaking through the City Proclamation, forbidding all in-going or out-coming within the barricades running east and west from Puddle Dock to Broken Wall, on pain of death; which barrier you have forced, and in so doing have acted profanely; the place being sacrilegious, and cursed of the Church as ground tainted, and growing *pest*; nor is it likely this is your only crime, since blood has been tracked and followed from the outlet whence you were seen to come, down Allhallows-street straight to the very water’s edge, where it most strangely disappears.”

Here, then, thanks to the eloquence of Master Saul Revel, Leonard saw before him the head and front of his offending ; and although he had little apprehension of the penalty's being enforced, all things explained, yet was his present arrest vexatious enough, although better than the King's presence being compromised, which at the first he had apprehended ; putting, therefore, a bold face upon the matter, he admitted that, under certain circumstances not then to be explained, he had been induced to enter within the prohibited boundary, and was ready, since such was the Sheriff's deputy's pleasure, to accompany him whither he thought good."

" You say well and wisely," observed the Sheriff's depute, with a nod of encouragement ; " evil doers, when detected, ought ever to speak out, since that rendereth them contumacious, and impeacheth their abettors ; if you be not hereafter perverse, I will, for this, have you holden to king's evidence ; whereby you may save your own neck by slipping your friend's

into the halter, as I would fain have had this knave a' done, but he spake falsely and very pertinent from the charge."

Hawkwood, the subject of this last allusion, " grinned horribly a ghastly smile," upon the diminutive Saul ; who, ill at ease so near the object of his apprehensions, moved farther off, calling out to those of the watch standing by Gilbert—

" Keep him sure, good fellows ; he already hath a huge deal to answer for in addition to his first offending, having since uplifted his hand against, and well nigh smote, our Lord the King, in my sacred person."

" But good Mr. Sheriff," interposed Leonard, directing the functionary's regards to the two females, who sat together on a seat, listening with evident impatience to discover from the incomprehensible jargon of Saul Revel, what turn the matter was like to take—" what have these good women done, that they should be so long held from their way home ? I pray you to let them pass on their road, since the hour grows late, and they have far to go."

“ Far or near, that may not be, young man,” gravely answered Revel, “ these, as well as all others here, being, as the law-books have it, *in particebus criminis*, must be consequentially held in *Custodium Regium*, that is to say, in the county gaol, to answer and abide judgment.”

“ Thou art but a fool, and drunk to say this stuff,” here broke forth a voice, which was instantly known by Leonard for that of the former speaker of the two ladies. “ And now, Master Deputy, I charge you to let us go our way without further hinderance, else, by my faith, you will find leisure to repent this.”

“ Hoity-me !” admiringly exclaimed the man of power, looking, with his watery eyes distended, and his shoulders shrugged up, from the speaker towards the rest of the group, as if to muster confidence from a view of his force. “ Certes me, sirs, I call on ye all to note this—here, ye may see, is petty treason and *lazy majesty* both under one. I call ye to witness, all good men and true, here is blasphemy and profane threats made against

the Majesty of our Lord the King, who, for the time being, I have the honour to be. I'll retail no more proceedings, but proceed agreeably on my office ; Sergeant Marshal, cause all present to be attached and regarded; meantime come you with me, till I search through the house, and we put our seals on all; so leaving it under pest-ban, since it has been through criminal intercourse made pregnant, and incorruptibly infectious."

"Stay!" cried Leonard, interposing, "stay, Master Saul, you will not surely venture to proceed to such extremities without other warranty than your own will—bethink you before you order this violence in the house of a free man, upon what evidence you proceed ; for be assured that at the last I will resist this outrage at all hazard—so be warned in time."

"Here's more treason," cried the little deputy, hastily retreating behind the cover of the stout Marshal's body, who, leaning on his pole-axe, stood ready to obey in any thing not requiring hasty movement, since of this he was

utterly incapable, and who now stared most sapiently about him, whilst his noisy principal continued, “ Put forth the strong arm, Master Sergeant—out some on ye and shout, a rescue—call in more help—raise hue and cry—down with all recusants. I warn ye to surrender prematurely or take the worst.”

“ Hold,” again interposed Leonard, “ Master Sergeant Marshal. I address you, being a reasonable man, and of experience in law ;” the Sergeant hiccupped gravely and closed one eye, in order to separate the objects before him, most of which were become oddly multiplied in his sight. “ Let but these women go, who, by my soul, have no more to do in this than you have, and I, with mine uncle and all else here, will surrender to your authority ; only begging further that, in consideration of his age and infirmities, you keep guard over him here till the morning, when I will clear him of all concert with me, in that I own myself to blame for, a trespass against the City’s order, but no crime beside.”

“ What says the Sheriff's depute ? ” here gravely demanded the Marshal, who, although not wholly comprehending this appeal, was inclined to view the matter moderately, and was old soldier enough to see no reason, but to take the sure side. “ Young Borgia methinks offers reasonable—an action for wrongous imprisonment might lye ; as for the women folk, let us but see their pretty faces, and know whose property they are, and we can easy enough come at them again if needs be.”

“ I am content in this,” replied Master Saul, who grew less violent in the prospect of a brawl ; in which he knew that, with all his care, he might light on a chance stroke ; “ I will be governed by you ; if our chief criminals be given up, and the others known and held to appear cognizable. But you remember there was a woman indicted in this case, and most likely one of these is she infected in the manner. Harkee, Bolton, should you again know the face of her young Borgia bare before him—ch ? ”

"I think truly not, Master Revel," replied a sneaking voice, tremulously pitched in a thin treble, coming from the rear of the questioner. Hawkwood groaned audibly at this sound, and rolled his eyes savagely in the direction of the speaker.

"I say I think no," repeated the poor reptile, sliding fearfully forward a pace or two, "only that she was a very young thing, and with a skin wondrous fair."

"Young and fair skinned," repeated Saul, gathering new courage from the louder sound of his own voice; and approaching where sat those most interested in this question, he cried — "come, my mistresses, rise, and let us see if either of your faces be young and fair; marry, I think not, for else had ye been less backward in unhooding."

"I am lost, for he is there!" suddenly exclaimed one of the persons, in a low tone, whilst the other figure calmly arose, and, raising both hands, with an air of superlative dignity lifted her hood backward off her head, disclosing to

view a face fair as an angel's, and of great beauty, but no longer having claims to youth.

To Leonard it was instantly known for one whose disdainful glance he never could forget ; and in astonishment he gazed upon her, till, following the direction of her fixed, piercing look, he caught, within the shade of the passage opposite, the figures of his uncle and the King.

“ Know me, Sirrah Sheriff, or whosoever else ye be,” she proudly said, “ for Dame Agnes Beauchamp ; and take my word for my friend's warrant, that she is wholly unknown in this business : and if, after saying this,” she added, in a tone inexpressibly touching, “ there be within hearing one with the spirit of a gentleman, and the heart of true knight, I charge him by both, if it may be *safely* done, to interpose his authority between my companion here, whose face must not be seen, and these brainless hounds of the law.”

“ Lady Agnes ! Lady Agnes !” cried the indignant Master Revel, not daring to lift his look against the withering scorn of the ladye's

eye—"If Lady Agnes you be, use gentle words, and excite not riot; *you* ought to know that I represent the *King*, and——"

"*Thou* represent the King!" repeated Ladye Agnes, contemptuously, "aye as the chattering magpye thinks he doth the eagle, soaring beyond his eye's ken in the clouds above; because he hath the power of wing in common with that royal bird: go to, Sirrah Constable, or whatever you are; you fancy yourself a tyrant, and art but a fool all the while."

"For all that must I know who 'tis you screen here, so overly careful; so advance, Serjeant, and do your duty."

"Stir not foot," here interposed a lofty voice of authority, coming from the direction of the passage in question; towards which all eyes were now involuntarily turned.

"Who speaks so audaciously?" called out the Sheriff, waxing furious, and hastily advancing in view of the two persons standing yet within the shade of the passage: "hah, hah! here

be darkling rogues and recusants overtly secreted and made void. 'Serjeant, come thou forward and seize this loud gainsayer.'

"Master Sheriff's depute, first a word with thee," added the voice which first spoke : "follow thou me quickly within, and I will shew thee good reasons why thou shouldst hold off here on this bidding."

The speaker retired slowly up the passage, having thus motioned him whom he addressed to follow ; whilst the latter, after standing in midfloor, for a moment, in stupid perplexity, was quickened into motion and activity at one word whispered in his ear, by old Andreas, on hearing of which he started, as though bit by a serpent ; turning fairly yellow with affright.

"Hold your hands, my men," he cried, hurriedly, in excessive trepidation ; "hold your hands ; and you, Serjeant Marshal, keep the peace, let no man or woman be mislisted or abused, till I come back."

So saying, he followed Borgia into an adjoining apartment ; where the King standing

unbonnetted, before the light, was instantly recognized by his officious deputy's deputy ; who in truth had imbibed full half the excessive zeal he here displayed, through supping in the presence ; and so growing to a false importance in his own eyes beneath the rays of his master's greatness, reflected on him from the daïs, within sight of which he had been happily seated.

“Now, Master Deputy, what's all this stir we hear of ?” demanded the King ; “and by what law do you extend so long an arm as to seize on all within this house, because one of its members is charged with having broken into bounds, by proclamation inhibited ?”

“May it please your Grace,” returned the alarmed Sheriff's depute, falling upon his knees ; and speaking in a key of whispering humility, laughably contrasted with his late authoritative flights, “the law is, that not only him, the first re-infect, but every and all other coming into after-contact with the aforesighted felon, legally attainted, shall become and be

held in the like degree, infectious, leprous, and pest-bitten, and to be on proof to this effect, dealt with after the manner made and provided in all such cases ; that is to say, arrested and straightway incarcerated, confined, refined, and after being so cleansed and rendered impure, again to be finally examined on evidence, and lawfully quitted, or otherwise found guilty ; and so left to be dealt on after the penalty."

"An this be the law of the matter, Master Sheriff, in the name of all that's infectious, seek not to enforce it to the letter ; or what becomes of us ? who, being here in contact with taint, are, as you recite, become, in our own person, infectious, leprous, pested, and impregnate : marry, sirs, we could just now, nevertheless, heaven save the law ! but ill spare the time to be duly confined, refined, and, as you say, rendered legally impure."

"Heaven defend !" exclaimed the deputy, who was instinctively imbued with the deference due even from the law to exalted per-

sons, “Your Grace’s sweet person must not be impugned, or in any way aggregated with the bodies of mean criminals, over whom the City’s safety——”

“Must be consulted, surely,” interposed Edward, growing impatient of the sot Sheriff’s jargon. “So think we. In which case must we all to prison, for certes us, and you, he, and all else who may have breathed the air infected, come, as it appears, within the word and letter of this law.”

“I foresaw not,” here mumbled the puzzled official, his ingenuity yet struggling with the legal difficulties of his situation, “nor dreamed even of this unprovided-for premunire your Royal wisdom hath, as it were, instinctively propined and convinced; but right certain am I that there is no law in such case provided, contemplatively to lay hands on your Grace’s anointed body; which, being so ‘nointed and made holy, can never be purified by any after-taint—but for all these others here—”

“From whom,” interposed the King, “had you information of young Borgia’s ill visit to this infected quarter?”

“From one, who saw creditably with his open eyes, both his regress and egress respectfully, your Grace: one Phil Bolton, a tailor, honest, and well to trust; who beheld, firstly, the unlawful entry of young Borgia and others, with certain men-at-arms unknown; and lastly and secondly, the re-transmission by the aforenamed Borgia, of a dead or dying fair young woman, at his saddle-bow; which dead or dying fair young woman, I promulgate to be one of the two now so hooded and unseemly becloaked without there.”

“And where,” enquired the King, “made ye seizure of these offenders?” thus encouraging the babbling of the half-muddled, half-terrified Sheriff, with a hope that he should gather from his ill-digested mass, some chance clue to the yet dark portion of the morning’s adventure; a knowledge which pre-

sent circumstances rendered most important to him.

“Your Grace must know,” replied Master Revel, strenuously striving to collect his ill-ordered brains, “that one of the criminated, well known to Phil Bolton—a brawling knave and sturdy ruffler, named Gilbert Hawkwood, bondservant to old Watts—was interrupted this even whilst striving too stoutly to enter within the Guildhall ; when being thereon challenged with his morning’s handywork by Bolton, now acting as a sworn constable, he hereon strikes me down that honest man, and in the confusion, makes good his forcible entry ; until your Grace being gone, and I being informed by Bolton of the manner, we scented out, followed, and laid hands on the perilous varlet, close by the gate of this house, whitherward our information likewise tended.”

“And this is all you know of the matter ?”

“Every tittle of the matter, your Grace.”

“Saint Mary!” cried the King, with well feigned gravity—“but here is an ill business, since this knave's pestilent presence hath legally infected the Mayor, ourself, and all others present at Guildhall in his company; observe ye this ill chance, Master Sheriff?”

“The varlet hath well earned thrice hanging, for his perverseness and nefarious propinquity of your Grace's presence; not to name the con'agion of his honour the Mayor,” returned Master Saul, with a low sympathetic reverence.

“Yet must we, both the Mayor and us, be left free from the penalty provided by law in such case; even for the wholesome government of this City and royalty, which may fall into ill management if we be kept confined for purification; so, for our sakes, and for your own, and all those no less in peril, hound off these beagles of yours; and leading them hence, explain this oversight as your own wit shall prompt, quickened by a flagon or two of well spiced ale; since of all medicines, rare spices

are ever your best purifiers ; to which end, here's master Andreas will furnish a few pieces, to pay all scores."

"It is not for me, who am but by depute your Grace's poor representative, or shadow, as I may say, to doubt your wise compounding of the law, who are the law's head and hand both," cried the complaisant authority. "Here has been, doubtless, some misnomer here, and I crave pardon of Master Andrew for the wrongous entry I have made herein ; I will straightway incite Phil Bolton, for his foolishness and plain malice prepense, and mulct him in his share of the spiced ale, and other penalties, for so misleading me ; and I am further to apprehend that your Grace's pleasure is to have all else replaced in statue quod ?"

"Exactly so," replied the King, who then, in a most significant and impressive manner, added—"and hearken further, for I know thee to be discreet—not a breathed word of our presence here ; for, if I come to the knowledge

of such babbling, which can fall from no other source than thy tongue, I have will it slit to the root, and hang thee after, over the conduit of Chepe ; as a warning to all future counsellors how they betray the secrets of their liege lord. Forget not that we have promised, since the King's word is sacred for good or ill. Now speed ye hence, and look that the City-watch be well and truly kept on this loose night ; so wilt thou and they be more wholesomely employed, than in again raising the fearful cry of *pest* ; which the frosts of a hard winter have, we trust in the saints' grace, silenced, and for ever, in this land."

Bowing reverentially before the understood wave of the royal hand, the well nigh sober Saul sidled crab-like from the presence, restraining his wonder for his own personal edification ; having quite discernment enough left to perceive that the King was at least serious in his desire to keep unknown : as the dignitary attended Borgia back to the kitchen, the old

man halted by the way, and slipping within his pouch a few pieces of coin, reminded him to "be prudent and wary of speech," a caution which Master Saul followed with an instinct that would have done honour to a whole-bred courtier.

Re-entering the kitchen with a mien but little embarrassed or abashed, he immediately directed his posse to withdraw, with sharp abuse of the amazed Phil Bolton, and a brief explanation to the Serjeant Marshal, "that might have puzzled an abler logician ; and, of all he said, the only comprehensible point was, the concluding sentence, which directed an adjournment to the sign of the Three Foxes, for the purpose of rest and refection.

"And now, **Ladye Agnes**," demanded the gallant monarch, re-entering, in turn, the kitchen as the Sheriff's deputy and his chopp'd fallen followers withdrew, "may the wit or hand of a knight, loyal and true, further serve you in this strange adventure of yours ?"

“ Your Majesty,” answered the ladye, with a most winning smile, “ has done all that might be expected, even from the chivalrous Sir Edward of Windsor, for the which nobleness, you have the thanks and prayers of your grateful servants ; who now only wait your gracious permission to depart from hence.”

“ May not I, then, first learn who else I here hold my debtor for this timeous rescue ? ” demanded Edward, bowing before the still hooded, and motionless companion of Ladye Agnes.

“ Sire,” replied the latter, “ I must forbid this, were she whom you address even inclined to comply. My word is pledged for this fair ladye’s safe conduct, who, whilst under my charge, *must* remain unseen and unknown.”

The latter sentence was pronounced with an earnestness and energy which, perchance, piqued the curiosity of Edward ; for, with a sly expression of features, he retorted—

“ And does the Ladye Agnes expect, also, to keep me, if untrusted, close-tongued on a subject so rife in matter of future merriment, as this wild visit of two court demoiselles to our comely squire of Lombard Street, here ? ”

“ As surely, Sire, as you, doubtless, expect my silence on the subject of our meeting here,” archly retorted the ladye : “ it being possible your Grace might be somewhat puzzled to account to our Ladye Philippa for your present visit to this house; wherein, if my ears deceived me not, there be more unseen demoiselles than have yet come to light.”

“ Ho, ho ! ” exclaimed the King, indulging in a hearty laugh, and then, with finger on lip, extending his hand to the shrewd ladye ; “ here is my glove on a fair truce ; although, on my soul, might all here be fully known, I should come spotless off.”

“ And, on *my* soul, if all might be known,

as spotless am I ; ” promptly said the ladye, in a manner convincingly impressive.

The King lifted her hand to his lip, and exclaimed, with a satisfied air, “ I do well credit that frank speech, Ladye Agnes, and so commend you safely homeward, since I may not offer better service—now, Messer Andreas, and thou, our bound-breaking friend, whose wayward fancies have this day wrought such strange adventures, let us in, where I have, also, a word or two of caution for your hearing.”

The King, with these words, after once more saluting the Ladye Agnes, leaving her, as she requested, to make her own arrangements for departure, retired from this scene ; and, followed by Borgia and his nephew, once again entered within the chamber impatiently tenanted by the much agitated Bertha ; who having, by the frightened Andreas, been, with vast exaggeration, informed of the state of affairs without, now greatly rejoiced to see that

Leonard was present, and safe, instead of being committed to prison; an event which his terrified uncle had reported as certain, when, big with horrors, he burst upon the King's privacy to acquaint him with the past ruffle.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Now, by my troth, maiden,” cried the King, reverting to some foregone discourse, after having, in few words, described the cause and end of the tumult, “ I tell thee again, there doth appear no better or sager course, than that I am resolute to take: these be wild times, and wild, too, are thy tidings; such as may not be governed by rule-guided measures.”

“ But the great hazard of what your Grace purposes?” urged the maiden.

“ Is in imagination, chiefly, beyond the peril ever to be looked for in a passage over

sea. Once with thy father and mine allies of Flanders, I am as well assured as when girt in by the walls of the Tower, here ; besides, Mowbray, with our fleet, will not be long after, but this cannot move with the required stillness ; so large a preparation would not fail to rouse the sleepers, and trumpet the already prepared to immediate action ;—as 'tis, I purpose to be well advised, and so made ready to strike the foremost blow.

“Send to the ship therefore for this knave sailor, that will not weigh without your bidding ; meantime, we will prepare the orders needful for those to whom we trust the secret of our absence ; to which end, since, as thou sayest this kinsman of thine is so clerkly, Andreas, will we sit here together, and make known this course to our prosperous cousin, of Derby, now in Gascony ; as well as to those whom we leave in trust behind.”

“Your Grace surely does not mean, in seriousness to quit this kingdom upon so sudden a thought, and without greater preparation,”

here enquired Borgia, with a look and accent wherein wonder and strong apprehension oddly mingled.

“ That do we, Master Andreas,” gravely replied Edward, “ and not so ill-prepared, either, thanks to thy gift here, since good gold is present preparation in any quarter.”

“ Had I, happily, but gotten one day’s notice of your Grace’s intent to visit this humble dwelling, I would have cared to provide an offering more worthy,” humbly observed the old man, “ but Isachar Benhadad, although there be dealings between us to four-times that amount, detained me a long while ere he could gather even the poor coin in question—gold, so he saith, being, at present, very scarce here in England.”

“ Therein spake Isachar Benhadad truly and like a Christian, as I can vouch for, which maketh such ready supply the welcomer ; certes, I doubt whether my exchequer would not have refused me the moiety of it,” merrily answered the King, as he again turned to Bertha, who yet continued to sit, absorbed in many doubts

and fears, raised by this sudden and rash resolution ; none of which were allayed or diminished by the surmise newly born, that her gallant preserver would be called on to share in the adventure : thus occupied, her look was unconsciously turned upon the chief object of her solicitude, who cheerfully engaged in preparing writing materials according to the King's command, was unconscious that, in the royal presence, there sat one who had eyes for his movements only ; suddenly, however, Bertha's attention was recalled by the voice of the King, who, addressing her, added, “ and now, fair ladye, we must hurry your good service, and pray you, on the instant, to send one for this knave mariner ; for the time flies, and, by my soul, I am right eager to be gone.”

“ Then, since it must be so,” cried the daughter of Artevelde, “ let there be found some honest matron to attend me, and I will in person be your Grace's convoy on board the Morning Star, where my word will be promptly obeyed.”

The King paused for a moment to look admiringly on the bold maiden, where she stood, resolute, yet half abashed by her own hardihood ; then taking her hand, whilst both his voice and manner bespoke the sincerity of his kindness, he answered—

“ Not so, fair sweetheart ; we are over tender for your good health and surety, to suffer either, for our kingdom's sake even, to be again endangered ; you have braved too many risks, and endured too much for one so gentle, already in our cause, and hereafter shall you find how grateful Edward of Windsor can be ; do thou our bidding quickly now, and during the delay, we will more fully explain our wishes.”

“ Who then may I seek to do this errand ? ” demanded Bertha, addressing Andreas, “ since his Grace is so positive—I would, I dare say wilful, in this matter.”

“ You, our sage ambassadress, are a privileged counsellor, and may say that you will,” gallantly retorted Edward ; “ but to business :

thou, Andreas, art too old and stiff of limb, for an errand by land and water, at this dark hour, requiring keen eye and nimble foot ; and our good squire here will be needed to play clerk—therefore see if you have not within the house some loyal and quick-sighted servitor, that can do the maiden's errand to this Flemish galley.”

“ There is one yet within, as I think,” interposed Leonard, “ who may be safely credited, for both cunning and courage—one Hawkwood, who——”

“ Hawkwood—Hawkwood !” quickly interrupted the King, “ if I mind me rightly, that was the name of him whom the wise Sheriff's depute charged as thy companion, in this morning's trespass—ha ?”

“ The same,” replied Leonard, “ and he of whom I made mention also, Sire, as having done me bold and timely service on that occasion.”

“ He will serve—therefore to him do thou guide our gentle monitress here, and bid him

do her errand ; this signet will pass him by the postern-gate—and hark thee, Andreas, bide thou without until one shall come who will enquire for Ned Windsor—that person presently conduct hither. No further word,” he added, observing Andreas about to speak ; taking, at the same time, Bertha’s hand, and leading her towards the door, he continued, in a half whisper, “ and be you silent too, our fair and young and wise ambassadress, worthy to be monarch’s counsellor in all but *courage*.”

“ Your pardon, Sire,” in the same key retorted Bertha, passing to the door, “ but recollect, there is a species of courage nearer allied to rashness than wisdom.”

“ Which brute courage, being unkingly, and not meet in a leader, thou wouldest tax me with—ha, bold wit ?” cried Edward, detaining her hand, and looking keenly into her pale, expressive face ; then turning hastily away, with a backward wave of his hand, he added, in the

manner of one too fixed to be moved from his determination—

“ Well, and may be so it is—yet does mad courage best fit mad times, and boldness oft jumps to the conclusion wisdom would fall short of.

“ Those papers—those papers,” he continued, with a changed voice and beclouded brow, “ had they but come safely to hand, we had now seen clear way. But as it is, we only know that toils, by traitors set, are closing round unseen, and that to hesitate may be to feel the meshes on our hands, ere we can mark the cast: once informed, and come the worst, we'll clear a brave opening with our swords, or failing, die, leopard-like, in the enemy's fold, and not be, slumbering, trapp'd in our own lair.”

Followed by Andreas, who closed the door, after many a timid backward look on his nephew, Bertha proceeded to dispatch Hawkwood to conduct hitherward Claus Burchen,

the person left in command of the Morning Star, when lured by Stetten's well connected tale, herself, together with the murdered Van der Oom and Heylen, quitted the vessel's side.

The reader will readily perceive that the cause of the present movement resolved on by the King, was the intelligence entrusted by Artevelde to his daughter only, and by her communicated to Edward ; with the details of which we did not think it necessary to trouble our reader, since they rather belong to the history of the two countries, than to the fortunes of those in whose fate we desire to interest him ; although this humbler object was immediately effected by the progress of the grand political movement in question.

Suffice it therefore to make known in general terms, that Edward had been informed of the party making head to restore Count Lewes, and so for ever bar against him the door through Flanders into France—also of the wild plot of Philip against his throne and life, in whose

details were impeached many nearest his person ; and finally of the Ruward's great anxiety to have him come suddenly and without stir, attended by the Prince of Wales, to meet the Flanders' deputies, who would be soon assembled, and through whose good will he doubted not to confer upon young Edward the rich sovereignty of the states.

Of all this intelligence, the dark hint of domestic treason was the most startling ; whilst the strange seizure of the papers in question magnified their import, and deepened the mystery they were intended to disclose. Hence came it that Edward, with a promptness of action, bordering certainly on rashness, but nevertheless quite in unison with his natural hardihood and love of adventure, determined to proceed forthwith in person to Sluys, to confer with Artevelde before the coming of these deputies, he was about assembling there ; leaving word for the Prince, and those in whom he knew he could confide, to follow at the quickest, with the fleet already assembled at Sand-

wich to carry supplies to Derby, now in Gascony.

By this step, the bold King argued he should at once know the worst against which he had to guard ; and unsuspectedly conferring with his demagogue friend and ally, in whom he had unbounded confidence, so be enabled to gain in action the start of those who now mined against him.

It so occurred that many chance circumstances, made directly in favour of this resolve, and, as is often the case, went perhaps almost as far as reason in aid of the King's determination. The vessel lay quite ready, the early morning tide would serve right well, the very wind too had turned at his will as it were, and now blew fair, from the north-west ; all things in fact sided too much with his own wish, to permit the design once fancied, to be shaken by any here ; and all others whose arguments might have proved more influential he was resolute to eschew, leaving them to learn his purpose in its accomplishment.

Being on the departure of Andreas and Bertha left alone with Leonard, the King in few words, made known his intent to the latter, whose boldness and intelligence had quickly attracted the confidence of one, to whose nature these qualities were so nearly assimilated—demanding of the youth in conclusion, whether or no he would freely make this voyage with him, and the Lord James Audeley ; to whom alone he intended further to extend this confidence, as to him only was known his present visit here.

Leonard simply, but fervently, thanked the King for his great kindness ; further declaring himself ready to follow wheresoever his master's will might point the way ; and, this said, in a few minutes was actively engaged in the honourable office of private secretary to his bold sovereign ; who, with his fingers twisted in his thick beard, would sit for a while quietly opposite to him, rapidly dictating his orders, and then springing up, would cross the room with hasty strides, muttering half-smo-

thered regrets for the lost papers, mingled with curses on the traitors by whom he was betrayed, and threats of hasty and heavy vengeance.

After completing this necessary correspondence, Edward once again called in the absent members of his small council, when giving the prepared packet to Andreas, he said—

“ Early on the morrow, bear these to John d'Ufford; until when, be silent and discreet. For your safe keeping, my valiant maid of Ghent,” he next added, with a cheerful air, “ we have taken good heed; your comfort will be cared for by our kind Philippa herself; who doubt not will find means fitly to entertain, and in good time honourably to transport back the daughter of our dearest friend, and best ally.—And now, how sayst thou, old gossip Andreas, that lookest on so wisely grave here—is there much chance, think'st thou, that Edward of England may by any curious eye be known, beneath this homely woollen gown that covers Ned Windsor, here?”

“ The King's Majesty could not, even by a

yet more unseemly robe, be hidden from my knowledge," answered Andreas, with a courtier bow; " so lest any such maladventure should arrive, I now bethink me, that I can here supply your Grace with a sure, yet simple disguise-
ment, that shall change your royal aspect as completely as a vizor of sendal." So saying, Andreas opened a curious looking cabinet hard by, and took from amongst many costly and rare articles of his craft, a singular looking instrument; this being rested, or, as he quaintly termed it, saddled across the nose, for which purpose there was due contrivance made, safely defended both eyes of the wearer, shielding them, as it were, with two circular plates of pure glass, or crystal, girdled within a ring of finest gold.

" Now take note of this, an it please your Grace," said the old man, adjusting, as he spoke, this odd contrivance to its proper resting place on his own nose; the change in the appearance of his face was at once whimsical and complete.

The monarch laughed immoderately as he, in turn, transferred this new toy before his own eyes, at the same time demanding—

“And what may be then the true use of this brittle eye-guard, or however else you call this thing? which may, in truth, well serve the place of a mask, so changing the fashion of a man’s face, that a father might forswear his first born, not having before seen him with this new fangled nose-harness!”

“These, your Grace,” said Andreas, “be a rare and most curious invention of a friend and countryman of mine, one Messer Spina of Padoue, named *besicles*; contrived to render objects, otherwise ill seen and confused, clear and distinct to the vision of those whose eyes are by reason of age or weakness beclouded and made dim. My kind countryman sent these to me, thinking that the old man’s sight might need such help, but, by St. Marco, I yet can see as clear and as far as most men.”

“Ha, ha! I do believe thee there, old Sir

Crafty," laughed the King, "yet, in sooth, is this *besicle*, an that be the name on't, a rare contrivance; it gives to a man besides, I know not how, the wise air and sage grave look, of the owl borne by the heathen goddess of wisdom Saint Minerve, whom we read of in the fabliaux; so whiles we would keep unknown we'll wear this new gift of thine; although *we* too can see far enough and keenly enough without the aid of Messer Spina."

The return of Hawkwood bringing the Flemish mariner was now made known, and with these two entered also the enquirer for *Ned Windsor*. Making a motion for silence to those already about him, Edward had instant proof of the efficacy of his new mask, for on coming into the room, Audeley stared around with an air of bewilderment that bespoke his having missed one for whose presence here he was come prepared.

"Thou hast then been to the ship?" enquired the King gravely, addressing Hawk-

wood ; Audeley visibly started, whilst Gilbert, eyeing the speaker with a most whimsical glance of recognition and amazement, answered in the affirmative, that the sailor now bided without.

“ ‘Tis well !” said the King, “ and now, maiden, will you give this servant of your father’s such directions as may seem best for our quick transport and landing at Sluys ; only keeping unknown the true quality of those forming our portion of his crew.”

Bertha knew that remonstrance of hers would now be vain, and silently, therefore, departed to do this bidding ; charging Claus Burchen to use all speed and care on his return with those entrusted to his pilotage, for whose honourable and quick conduct, she assured him, the Ruward was not less interested than for her own.

This done, Edward was introduced as Master Borgia, which name he selected as that he would be known by during the continuance

of his present concealment ; a little favour which greatly uplifted the sorrowful heart of poor Andreas.

The loud bell of St. Botolph struck midnight just as all was pronounced to be ready, and soon after sallied forth the small cavalcade which formed the present escort of royalty, a few hours before so differently waited on. First went the King himself, attended by Audeley and Burchen, both equally amazed, though from different causes ; next followed Jocelin and Cyril, bearing a couple of heavy mails, containing all the needful articles which Borgia's care could manage in such haste to collect, together with the supply of good gold nobles so happily timed.

Wherefore, we know not, but of this little group Leonard, albeit usually no laggard, was the last to quit the house ; he tarried for a billet Bertha prepared for her father, and at length received it, together with an adieu—which, as they were alone, he fancied, for he

was very fanciful, somewhat hurried and sudden, if not even ungraciously, and, to him, unwarrantably brief and abrupt.

From his anxious uncle he heard, as together they slowly walked across the courtyard, a thousand charges to be wary of danger, and not over forward amidst blows, since valour was alone commendable, if ever, when wholly under the guidance of prudence and wisdom. So said the fond, timid old artist, adding in conclusion, and with an air of much solemnity, as together they halted by the great gate, whilst the rest of the party passed outward with the King ; “ and now, Caro Leo, hold up thy right hand whilst I place upon thy finger this rare and costly ring ; of which I need not to say more, to recommend it to thy careful keeping, than that it belonged to thy parent, who, my poor boy, it hath been thy hard lot never to have known.”

Tears were evidently trickling down the aged face of the speaker, since Leonard felt the hot drops falling fast upon his hand.

“I have had, dear sir,” he gratefully answered, raising his uncle’s hand to his lips, and kissing it tenderly, “in you I have had both parent and friend; and, although I may deplore their early deaths, have not lost in losing those nearer to me, any advantage which zeal, great love, and wisdom could supply.”

“I—I know not that, Caro,” retorted Messer Andreas, in a hurried manner; then with less agitation continuing, “but thou art eager to be gone, and heaven’s good will be accomplished: I seek not longer to detain thee in the lowly nest which has hitherto been thy shelter; take thy way, take thy way, and God’s angels be with thee. Part not with that ring, I say, since its impress will ever gain thee ready supplies if produced here to me; that will also serve to inform me thou art well, without troubling thee with many words in writing. Now, the hand of Jesu’ be thy guide: only at parting, this—take heed to thy life in these rude times for my sake, since I should

surely die miserable and broken-hearted to lose thee wholly."

The old man's voice again grew weak and faltering: suddenly he wrung the hand he held, turned silently away, and hurriedly made for the house. Leonard looked for a moment after him: on the steps he saw the three female domestics assembled, and by the light they bore, recognized, as he thought, more within the door a fourth face, whose pale brow and jetty hair might not be mistaken. Waving his hand to the group, he sprang through the near wicket-door, and ran hastily towards Fan-church; near to which he overtook those whom he sought to join, and thence proceeded for the Posterne at a more sober pace.

Audeley was in close converse with the King, and being thus at leisure, Leonard recollected, and only then did it occur to him, that Hawkwood was not in company—a circumstance the more admirable, since that worthy had begged hard of Leonard, during the last bustle of hasty preparation, to ask the King's

leave for him to follow on the voyage he had sagacity enough to perceive was afoot—a suit which Leonard refused to advance, for two reasons; first, that he knew the King would most likely think such an apparent betrayal of his confidence—as this, without long explanation, would appear—unguarded and impudent; and next, that Hawkwood was not his own master; and with all his shrewdness, fidelity, and courage, not wholly to be relied on where a hasty word or act might produce wild mischief.

In order, however, to soften, as much as possible, the refusal he thus felt compelled to give, Leonard requested his company to the boat, and agreed that he should after return, and report their so far safety to his uncle and his fair guest.

In a moment after, circumstances of more immediate consequence banished honest Gilbert and his possible course from the mind of his friend; who, rallied by the King on his backwardness, became alive only to their quick-

est and quietest mode of progressing through streets, even at this late hour, affording frequent proof of the effects of the day's festivity. They were annoyed and half hustled by more than one party of inebriated roysterers, all ripe for quarrel they were incapable of sustaining. From the taverns in the vicinity of the river yet might be heard the roar of revelry: arriving near the Postern-gate they were somewhat sharply challenged by the watch, a few words from Audeley, however, sufficed to pass them here; and leaving the City by this gate, they proceeded to the east end of Tower Garden, where the boat already waited for them. Here dismissing the knaves who had borne the mails, the King and his two youthful confidants, together with Claus Burchen, were in a few minutes rowed on board the Morning Star which craft immediately getting under weigh, was, soon after the party left the shore, proceeding with a brisk wind at about N.W., down the dark silent course of the broad river.

The distant challenge of the centinels on the bridge was the last land cry which faintly reached the royal ear; the lofty light of the lantern above the Gate-house soon after vanished from Edward's eyes, as with his face turned to the west he silently gazed to the latest upon it: then, and not till then, did he cheerfully direct his look towards their present course, and having joined James Audeley, who, with his head bent over the poop quarter-rail, was watching the galley's rapid way through the smooth water, the King quietly leaned beside him, in a merry whisper saying—

“ And now, our right trusty cousin James, how think'st thou now of this royal venture ? ”

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER his horse's sudden fall in the early morning, Sir Alaine de Rerefonde—who, the reader's sagacity will most possibly have recognized as the knightly waylayer of Bertha, and the assailant of Leonard—was borne to the boat yet hovering near, and conveyed as quickly as possible, together with his wounded follower, on board Rainer's vessel, attended by Conrade Stetten; whilst the soldiers led by d'Aurai passed over bridge to Southwark; which line of march it was their duty to patrol.

Before the boat had even passed beneath

the bridge, Sir Alaine was recovered from the stunning effect of his unthought for and heavy fall ; being otherwise unhurt, and fully alive to the danger of his present situation, he had no sooner touched the deck of Rainer's ship, than, by his order, the boat again departed, to reconnoitre the scene of the late attack ; and, if possible, to ascertain whether the obstruction to his plan for Bertha's seizure, arose, as he hoped and believed, from mere accident, or, as his fears sometimes suggested, was the effect of some treachery amongst those in whom he trusted.

The time was critical, and, during Conrade's absence on this errand, Sir Alaine more than half resolved, first, to send brief notice of his awakened suspicions to those of his party most likely to be implicated in any discovery made by Artevelde ; next, to consult his own safety, by calling together his lances, making use of the vessels appointed to carry him to Gascony, and hoisting instant sail, compel them to steer for Flanders ; there openly raising

the standard of Count Lewis, strike the first blow, and leave the rest to fortune.

The mission of Conrade, however, was productive of a chance which considerably allayed the immediate apprehensions of the Knight, and left him a less hazardous game to play. The scene of the late affray had been fully searched, and every article of harness likely to be recognized, removed from the dead horse, whose carcass, together with the lifeless body of poor Vander Oom, was dragged into a deep ditch, or drain, communicating with the river; to the same unhallowed grave was also destined the worthy Jan Van Heylen; but, whilst removing him to this foul receptacle, strong signs of life were happily exhibited by him, and these giving promise of some advantage to be derived from his recovery, the ruffian bearers were directed to change their course, to them a matter of absolute indifference, and their insensible burthen was deposited in the boat; where, stretched along the stern sheets, partly covered with a

cloak, his revival was, during their return to the Free Maiden, anxiously assisted by Conrade; who, on the way, observing that in the first moments of returning animation, the hand of the wounded man was often and instinctively as it were, passed over a particular portion of his doublet, and that he at length grasped this with all his recovered strength, tenaciously resisting any endeavours to remove his hold, the wily Esquire's suspicion became directed to this guarded spot, search was made, and a carefully sealed packet found.

From the contents then of this packet, directed to Edward of England, Sir Alaine became master of the state of affairs generally, and learned that whilst some, of whose agency even he was ignorant, were fully denounced as being in the pay of France, he was unmentioned, and therefore unsuspected. That the maiden was dead, too, he more than hoped, since Conrade described this event as almost certain; and thus reassured, he resolved to pursue the road yet left open for a vigorous

parting blow, at least ; having now ample opportunity for his own safe removal, in the time which must necessarily elapse before any new communication could be received from the Ruward of Flanders.

Setting a bold, shrewd fellow, Herman Rainer, brother to the sea captain of that name, on the track of the lady, with directions to endeavour to discover her abode, and, if possible, her condition, whether living or dead, Sir Alaine resolved to proceed to Kennington, and take his appointed stand on the side of the defenders in the coming tourney. To this intent he soon after landed at Southwark, where, mounting a spare hackney of d'Aurai's, who was on duty near, he proceeded onwards, and was one of the first of his party who entered the pavillion prepared for the foreign knights to arm them in ; near to which their war-horses and harness had been all duly ordered since the preceding day.

What followed, so far as this narrative stands affected, has been already minutely detailed,

save that the quick eye of Conrade, whilst in attendance on Sir Alaine in the field, had not failed to recognize in one of the challengers, whose remarkable horse had before awakened some ill-defined recollection, the late sturdy opposer of his master's will; for it so chanced that the esquire was close to Leonard as unhelmeted he rose, after his encounter with Giovanni d'Ossat. Hence naturally came new cause for wonder, not unmixed with fresh alarm: Sir Alaine, on this strange chance being whispered to him, immediately set Conrade to dog at the heels of the suspected party, in order to learn who he truly was; whilst, under the pretext of fatigue and continued indisposition, excusing his non-attendance on the King, the Count immediately rode back to his own quarters to await, in a condition far from enviable, the result of his esquire's enquiries as to the true name and condition of this stranger, who had so suddenly and mysteriously twice crossed his path.

Hours, as long as any ever counted by an

impatient spirit, prycked on by hope, by love, or fear—those sharpest spurs to lazy time—wore slowly away before Conrade felt warranted to report to his master more than the fact of his being on the scent, as already borne to Sir Alaine by Herman Rainer, who was the person dismissed at the ferry of Blackfriars, to this end.

Conrade, having traced Leonard to the house of Borgia, found no difficulty in ascertaining the name and quality of its owner, as well as the fact of his having a nephew answering to the description he gave, and in so much tallying with the young man's first avowal ; to learn the presence or condition of the ladye, was, however, an affair of much more difficulty ; but the indefatigable spy stuck, notwithstanding, to his post, resolute to unravel this point, so important to their security.

Whilst thus waiting about, the arrival of the two strangely muffled women was the first incident which spoke, as it were, to the existence of her he sought—next came the disguised

King, attended by Audeley, who, on the entrance of his master, Conrade beheld rapidly stalk away like one desirous of keeping unseen. Not daring to accost any one whose face he could not see, for fear of being himself recognized, Conrade here felt the necessity of procuring some aid, as well as of making known the fact of his having clearly discovered the existence of much mystery, which, connecting itself with the present causes for apprehension, was sufficiently startling. With so much, then, did he hasten to his master just after the event we have last alluded to, namely, the entrance of the disguised monarch into Borgia's house.

Sir Alaine saw at once the importance of this clue so happily obtained, and from this hour not a movement about the dwelling of Borgia passed unspied by the Knight's agents, and sorely perplexed were they by all that followed. The expulsion of the chop-fallen watch, which was the first event encountered by them, gave rise to a thousand strange conjectures, and yet remained in the main per-

plexingly inscrutable. In vain Rainer joined the goodly group at the Three Foxes, clink'd cup with the Sheriff, swore soldier songs with the Marshal, and paid score for all; little could be sifted from the contradictory jumble of lies and conjectures, voided by the besotted crew, beyond the fact of one of the persons present being a court dame, and sister to the Earl of Warwick.

Lady Agnes and her companion were also followed to Warwick House, and had Herman Rainer possessed numbers sufficient, 'tis more than probable they would both have been seized and carried on board the Free Maiden, on bare speculation; since the young ruffian after regretted to Conrade his inability to obey the suggestion to this effect, which had occurred to him, whilst following after the ladies.

The movement of Hawkwood, which came after, was too decided to leave much doubt as to its ultimate object. On Gilbert's arrival at the river, he found there would be some diffi-

culty in procuring a boat on this night of revel, and Rainer it was who, accosting him by accident as it appeared, learnt his dilemma, and good-naturedly tendered him a passage; since, as he said, he was going by the Flemish galley, or nearly so, on the way to his own ship—and although on this occasion he soon discovered that Hawkwood was neither to be pumped nor squeezed, he yet saw quite enough in Burchen's hasty landing after, and in the bustle of preparation continued on board his vessel, to become master of the purpose of all this stir. Hastening back to Sir Alaine, he made known to him his reasons for presuming the Morning Star was about to set sail; for which purpose, supposing their route to be Sluys, the wind and tide both served most temptingly.

“ Then are they ours,” exclaimed the Count in reply; “ they and their plots, during my pleasure, shall be speedily transferred to the safe keeping of the strong wall of Rerefonde. Now, Rainer, here is a venture will try both thy wit and mettle; on the

instant must thy stout ship be set in motion, consorting hence this tale-bearing galley of the brewster king's, till, after thine own fashion—only marking the moment best suited for present security and after silence—thou canst seize upon, and bear her living freight to Rerefonde, keeping all else on board freely to thine own disposal."

This order was given in a shape too tempting not to be unhesitatingly acquiesced in by Rainer; the worthy had, in truth, already cast an eye of seaman-like admiration and desire over the symmetrical proportions of the trim galley he made it a point to pass on his way from his ship. In addition to his own crew, which he readily guessed must be about twice as numerous as that of his destined prize, Sir Alaine now directed some half score men-at-arms, and as many cross-bows, to be embarked, who would not fail to do good service, should the enemy prove rash enough to offer resistance.

"Never doubt, Sir Alaine," replied the

sailor, when these points were arranged, and his course pointed out to him, “we always keep all clear for a smooth run, and once seaward of Gravesend, let yonder craft sail like the devil in a south-east wind—which she’s like enough to do if one may judge by her shapely build—yet will I lay a double barique of Bordeaux to a demi-pottle of sour beer, the Free Maiden shall give a good account of her at the tail of a long day’s run. But whereabouts will you have these honest folk I’m to overhaul, landed, since, as you know, I may not well quit the seas till we have some hearing of him of Rochelle, and the ships which must await my pilotage.”

“Here is Father Mathieu,” answered the Knight, “will accompany you on board, to return to Zealand: such prisoners as he shall think fit to claim you will land near Rerefonde, together with the Father and his escort; then pushing back to seaward, keep your rendezvous with Barberoux, the free Gascon, and his English ally, Thirlwall, who will, if they hold faith—

the which I doubt not—be on our waters with full two hundred as desperate doers as ever went forward with victory in the front and a gallows in the rear. I will, before three whole days are past, be myself afloat ; I feel that the hour is come, and, casting from my face the vizor of deceit, the which there is no longer need to wear, we'll breathe an open defiance to England through the first trumpet that calls Cadsant to surrender—that won, the Scheldt is ours ; and Artevelde must after look well to his seat, since even now he rides with a loose girth although he dreams not of it.”

Little bustle was required to ship the well ordered retainers of Sir Alaine, who for some time past were ever held in readiness for a sudden route. Father Mathieu received his master's instructions in private, both for his own conduct in the concerted violent seizure of the galley, and for the Dame of Rerefonde, who was yet to be apprized of her lord's speedy return to his home.

When all were fairly on board, the Free

Maiden started from her moorings, about an hour and a half before the Morning Star got under weigh, and under the skilful direction of Rainer, swept down the river beneath a press of sail, in order to await somewhere seaward of the Nore for the intended prize ; whose lighter burthen and peculiar capabilities Rainer well foresaw, were more likely to be available against the larger craft he commanded, in the smooth waters of the Thames, than when scudding across the North Sea, with the wind right on the poop, as it now was and promised to be for some time longer ; for the change to the north-west had, in the course of that day, come gradually round, point by point, in regular attendance on the sun's course ; a circumstance which, by a sailor's eye, is always hailed as a prognostic of constancy in the fickle element.

We will now return on board of the vessel bearing our English Cæsar and his fortunes, which clearing the river, held a fair and prosperous course for her destination. The

approach of a wild-looking sunset on the following evening, beheld our little party weary, but all well, each straining his eyes to catch a last glimpse of the white cliffs of the lofty Foreland, which shewed for one moment lighted out by the sun's rays, to be in the next shrouded by the hazy veil of evening.

The gale, which since early morning, although dead fair, had blown almost too heavy to permit of the Morning Star's doing her best, was now subsiding into a suspicious quick succession of fitful lulls and puffs; whilst as the sun sank lower in the horizon, dark heavy masses were seen to lift their heads threateningly from out the very depths of ocean, and then suddenly to become stationary, thus moulding, as it were, their fearful array for a quick coming battle: the ever restive waves too, no longer subject to the mastery of the steady gale, took each his own eccentric course, now tossing back their foaming crests against each other in wild confusion, now bounding singly upwards in unrestrained assertion of

their sudden freedom ; then for the few next minutes cowering down their heads, and rushing on in forced obedience to the angry wind, which ever and again thus rose with increased might, as if still resolute to assert its proud right of domination, to curb the wanton slaves, and lash them to subjection.

This heavy cross sea, and the untimely fitfulness of the gale, destroyed the hopes our passengers were encouraged to hold, of a very quick passage : they were also become wearied out with watching, for since their departure from the Tower, not one of them had left the narrow boundary of the poop deck ; from this elevation they continued, by the frank air and cheerful countenance they kept, to encourage, as from time to time it became needful, the weary oarsmen and mariners ; about this period, however, saddened by the change of weather which, as Burchen assured them, must necessarily prolong their approach to Sluys until the following morning, the elder merchant insisted upon his nephew and friend accompanying him below, to

seek relief from the, to them, weary monotony of the present scene, in the sleep their heavy eyelids craved. Yielding to this desire, the voyagers left the deck, and passing beneath it, after desiring to be called early on the morrow, sought each his narrow berth.

It was very shortly after the retreat of our passengers, that a goodly sized ship, which had held the same track with themselves, since she was first made out early in the day, was perceived, by those of our galley, to be rapidly nearing them ; which the unsteady wind, the present rough condition of the sea, together with the larger spread of canvass, and more numerous oars she possessed, well enabled her to do.

The circumstance attracted notice certainly, but gave rise to curiosity rather than apprehension, since the flag of Ghent had, at this time, no confessed enemies, and pirates were, thanks to the cruisers of the Free States and Friesland, unknown within the narrow seas.

A little time sufficed to make out that the stranger bore the Brabazon colours over her lofty prow, as, climbing and plunging through the seas, she rapidly came on. Burchen now set her down, therefore, as some ill-governed ship, bound for Dordrecht, or the lower Scheldt, whose captain was desirous of a confirmation of his course, or chose to depend on another's pilotage for a sure land-fall, rather than his own, finding that, with a wild looking night coming on, he was rapidly drawing in with the coast; which, only a few minutes before had been made fairly out beneath the keen glance of the watchful seaman, glistening like a line of burnished silver, as the last ray of the sun rested for a minute's space upon the long ridge of sand-crested embankments, girdling this low line of land.

The first hail of the stranger proved the conjectures of Burchen to be rightly founded; and, after answering the enquiries usually made in such cases, and exchanging a few sea

courtesies—prognostics of the weather, and the like ship-gossip—the two vessels held on their uneven path in company.

The increasing darkness of night continued to bring with it an increase of wind, until at last it became needful, in the opinion of the prudent Burchen, and indeed in conformity with the timid usages of the mariners of the day, to take in all sail, and turn before the blast: and, at the very moment orders were being loudly given by the commander of the Morning Star, to this effect, down rushed a squall of such fierceness, that the vessel was, as it were, compelled at once to yield bodily before it.

Shouting, therefore, a hasty caution to the stranger close beneath his lee, Burchen at once put his helm hard up, whilst the Free Maiden, by a manœuvre at once skilful and hardy, laid her head sails aback, and so paying more slowly off the wind, suffered the Morning Star to range nearly alongside in her course, and, before any such movement could be either sus-

pected or averted ran her close on board, tossing ready grapplings into her rigging, and oars and planks over her gang-way ; so making an easy passage for some score of full armed men, who, until this the proper moment, had been kept closely screened beneath the deep bulwarks of Rainer's ship, whence they only thus rose to pounce on their easy prey.

Defence, at first unthought for, became in a moment useless, hopeless, since the whole crew of the prize did not count the number of those already in possession. Roused from the deep sleep of youth and health, by the fierce shout of the boarders, and the sudden trampling over head, Leonard was the first to spring from beneath the poop, to be himself at the same instant, roughly pinioned between two sturdy fellows ; one of these however, before he had time for question, or resistance, was felled like an ox to his foot, by a heavy stroke aimed from the poop, below the break of which they stood ; with this good blow too, burst on the hearing of Leonard a well known

voice, shouting out in the same reckless tone the speaker would have used in a City ruffle, by Chepe Conduit.

“Draw, Len, and lay quickly about thee, thou’lt strike few friends here, I reckon : cry out aloud to warn them that sleep within, and we’ll yet shew these sea-dogs some play for our money.”

Dropping from above as he spoke, the bold Hawkwood, for he it was, lighted in his own proper person, armed with a huge mallet, by the side of him he addressed, and in a moment was fiercely grappling with the comrade of the man his first blow had felled: Audeley, too, now rushed from the narrow entrance, placing himself before it, sword in hand—then arose on all sides a shout of “kill ! kill ! down with those who dare resist !” A fierce rush of many men followed—the little group were in a moment overwhelmed and disarmed, to feel themselves and their monarch a pirate’s prisoners ; whilst a sudden blaze bursting from one side, lighted up the whole terrific scene : never

was night made more hideous than by the red pitchy flame of the fire-pots thus kindled on the poop and forecastle of the captor of the Morning Star, revealing the utter hopelessness of her condition—her unfurled canvass yet weltering amidst the wild waves, or being hastily gathered in by yet wilder men ; whose savage cries drowned the fierce blasts of the wind, before which the vessels both fearfully rushed along ; whilst the despairing eyes of the prisoners turned towards the source of this light only to behold every post of defence there bristling with hostile steel.

CHAPTER IX.

“ WE yield all here, rescue or no,” cried Leonard, in answer to the fierce demand made to this purpose, as he became, through the agency of the fire-pots, sensible of their inability to offer any effectual resistance; although still utterly confounded, and incapable, amidst the hellish confusion raging about, to make out whether they were indebted to treachery or surprise for their present fate.

“ Borgia, this is a fearful chance,” whispered Audeley, striving to keep the unsteady

footing he had gotten by the side of him whom he addressed.

“Terrible indeed! and the—mine *uncle*, I mean?” enquired Leonard, checking his tongue.

“He is within, but almost distraught, and will hardly, I fear, be long withstrained.”

“By your leave,” cried Leonard, addressing himself to Rainer, whom he heard hailed by those about for Captain, as jumping, with cat-like agility over the wreck, and the various impediments scattered in his way from the forecastle, he saluted his prisoners, whilst an air of humourous triumph lighted up his rough coarse features, made ruddy with constant debauch; “may we crave to know whose prisoners we are so unaccountably become, since we cannot surmise by what law or reason capture is made in these seas, of a London merchant, a passenger in a free ship of Ghent, sailing under a safe conduct from the Ruward of Flanders himself.”

“Ho, ho! my young tilter *d'amours*—you

are here, are ye? but less hot upon't, methinks, than ye were on the morning of yesterday, when, with a petticoat in the wind, you'd listen to no law save club law, nor hear any reason save the fiery argument to be stricken from sharp steel."

Leonard was much startled by this direct allusion to that morning's adventure, since it added new mystery to their present situation, and gave to a chance, in any light sufficiently alarming, a more deep and dangerous colour than they had looked to dress it in. He hesitated therefore, fearful to hazard a reply—whilst, after indulging in a hearty laugh at his manifest surprise, Raincr continued—

"Ho, ho! that's a stopper for your loose tackle, is it, youngster? However, keep up a good heart, there's no bodily ill intended you here, that is, provided always you well overhaul your manners, and keep your grapplers by your own side. So now give way, and let's see how many cabin passengers we have within here."

“ In here is none other, save my uncle Messer Borgia, who is ill a-bed,” cried Leonard, speaking very loud, as he opened the door, and stepped foremost within ; “ here are besides, our kinsman Robert James, our servant Gilbert, and, with myself, you see all.”

“ The devil I do ?” cried Rainer, with an air of disappointment, “ what, and have ye not the maiden with you ?—her of Ghent, I mean ?—But come, give way, young sirrah—I’ll take my own eye-warrant for all between decks.

“ Meantime,” he added, turning, after a whisper from one of his men, and pointing to Hawkwood, who was drawing close in behind Leonard, “ some of ye turn this sturdy lout here, who is so overly fond of his own handy-work, on board the Free Maiden ; he’ll be one too many here for his own good perhaps, and if he’s so fond of fighting, we’ll answer for his soon coming by a skin full o’ that.”

Vainly did Hawkwood struggle and curse, and as vainly did Leonard plead, offering any

reasonable ransom for one whom he claimed as his uncle's body servant, although quite at a loss to account for his unexpected, and for himself, poor fellow, unlucky appearance here.

The orders of Rainer were so promptly obeyed, that Leonard had barely time allowed, under pretence of saying farewell, to whisper in his ear a caution as to the King's presence, and a hint, in case he should by chance escape, whither to bear this evil news; as for honest Gilbert himself, finding that neither force nor words were likely to benefit him, he at length fairly made a virtue of necessity, and quietly accompanied his escort over the vessel's side—a service which the state of the weather rendered anything but safe or agreeable, presuming there existed no other cause for dislike of the movement.

Rainer next entered the cabin, and passed over to the little inclosure, situated at the extreme stern of the vessel, where Leonard described aloud his *uncle* to be, and where,

in truth the Lion of England lay penned up, fiercely chafing in his narrow den.

Edward had, as well as his followers, been awakened by the increased din above, and gained the main cabin leading to the gang-way soon after Audeley ; but the moment's pause occasioned by his having to seek in the dark for the outlet through the bulk-head, Audeley had carefully closed behind him, put the King in full possession of the state of affairs without, and the folly of attempting resistance, which it was apparent could only end in the destruction of himself, and the few who sided with him.

Retiring, therefore, when he heard Rainer declare his intention of searching the cabin, he took the hint thrown out by Leonard, and placing before his eyes the gift of Andreas, threw himself again upon his couch, to await the next chance of fortune ; here he lay curbing, although with difficulty, the swelling spirit that rose within, prompting him on

to a thousand wild deeds, till he had more than half resolved to dash out the pirate leader's brains as he stooped to enter in ; then, where he was, openly proclaiming his name, trust for safety, to the terror it would create amongst the lawless crew—or, at the worst, crying his war cry, fight to the death rather than suffer the hands of such slaves to impeach the freedom of England's King.

He was fortunately, as it happened, allowed time for cooler reflection ; and, in conclusion, wisely resolved to remain, as nearly as possible, in the state Leonard so loudly prescribed to him, and consider some after-scheme for release and revenge.

In accordance with this latter resolve it was, that Edward resumed the discarded *besicles* of Messer Spina, and extending himself upon the couch, calmly as might be, awaited the entrance of his rude visitor, whom he heard on his way noisily throwing open and examining the other two small enclosures contained beneath the poop.

The third was the little cabin occupied by the King: it was by far the largest, since it ran fore and aft about one-third of the whole space of the enclosure, and extended athwart ships the full breadth of the galley, it was also richly and elegantly fitted up, having been intendedly planned for the occasional occupation of its late lovely tenant.

On shoving back the well-contrived slide in the bulk-head, by which this place was entered, Rainer raised the lamp he carried over his head, and gazed in stupid wonder on the strange luxuries before his eyes.

A many-coloured carpet of Persia covered the deck, festooned hangings of velours and fine tapestry descended in rich folds from the sides, clothing and concealing the rude deformity of the knee-timbers; the beams running athwart were all differently carved into various groups of strange birds and rare flowers, each naturally brilliant in its own colours; whilst heads of angels, or Cupids, crowned with golden stars, peeped out in bold relief

from their flowery lurking-places, giving to this small space the air of a summer tent of some fairy queen, rather than the cabin of a wind-worn bark having but a plank between its tempting freshness and the foul waters of the North Sea.

The door at which Rainer stood was situated on the right; ranged against the opposite side, ~~of~~ the extreme left, stood a small couch, scarcely raised a foot above the lower deck, but which, in richness, well assorted with its neighbour toilet, and the two or three other articles of furniture the cabin held. Extended on this couch it was that the eye of the seaman, after wandering in amaze over all else, caught the figure of the man he sought; who, after a familiar nod or two, he hailed aloud, with—

“Ah, ha! old Skulker, you’re there, are ye? snug’s the word—eh? By the blood, but you know how to cut for a good berth! Why, I say, this beats the grand galley of the Emperor of Constantinople, that I once saw! Here’s

dainty trickery! St. Jonah! it were a pity the ground fishes should ever make their slimy nests in the like—eh?”

“ How say you, master?—what violence is here doing within the four seas to peaceful men employed in forwarding honest traffic?” inquired the King, in a very ill-assumed tone, intended to express alarm.

“ Nay, no great matter of violence, Master Borgia, since that, as I hear, is your name,” answered Rainer; “ only a change of market for your commodities—nothing worse. We’ll pilot your wares to a more profitable harbour than the one you sought, if this breeze blow not over strong, which, by the d——d bellowing those coward Zealanders keep over head, seems likely enow.”

The noise of hurrying feet and loud voices over head, had indeed, within the last minute, evidently increased; curses, threats, and words of command now came fearfully mingled with the rush of the spray, which broke along the deck, as the light craft, checked by the lash-

ings, was forced down in the more frequent squalls of the now roaring wind before which she could no longer freely yield as before. Just as Rainer, alive to this change, with an attentive turn of his head, concluded the last remark, one of his own crew hastily appeared at the door, quietly saying, as he bent forward, smoothing, with one hand, the water from his shock hair and beard—

“ Captain, they say aloft we must cast off all lines and grapplings, and drive for it—of a certainty the wind does come down in wicked squalls, every one worse than the last, and is, as I think, forging right round to the east ;—not a star is to be seen either, but all about is black as midnight in December without a moon—they have already down'd the canvass, in spite of all I could do.”

“ Down'd the fiends !” interrupted Rainer, who, from his longer voyages to Spain and the more distant parts of the Mediterranean sea, added to a naturally intelligent bold spirit, was freed from the timidity common to

the coasting seamen of this period. “ So then the Free Maiden is hauling us along, broadside on under all, like a dead dolphin. I guessed so much, by this infernal grinding and groaning among the timbers of this tender boat.

“ What, in the devil’s name, are sails for, think they, if we must vail them before every puff, or only hoist them when there’s no longer wind enough in the sky to belly out the canvass? On deck, I say, bid them see every thing clear, to hoist away all sail, or I’ll make a clear ship of the louts, quickly, else.”

Away rolled the sailor, taking a parting look at the strange gear about him, and giving a grin that shewed a row of teeth like a young shark’s, bristling under his black moustaches, whilst, hastily turning to the King, the speaker went on—

“ Come, old sea-mate, open those windows over your eyes, and try, for once, how you like looking on the sea at dark night, when the gale whips the waves into flame ; up, up,—since you must change this dainty bower for

a rough crib on board the Free Maiden, though only for a short passage."

"In that case, then, I shall do well enough here," coolly replied Edward, drawing the coverlet very composedly about him.

"I tell thee, man," in a louder tone, continued Rainer, somewhat taken aback by the exceeding tranquil manner of this reply, "you must up—I must aboard my own ship; and mind me, you, I say, shall go along."

"And mind me," replied the King, in the same unruffled voice, "you, I say, may go whither you list, but, for me, I will not budge one inch from out this place."

"He is mad," said Rainer, in a half whisper, "and I but little wise to be wasting breath on the old babbler. Aft, here, some of ye," he bawled loudly, looking forth; and, in a minute, Herman Rainer, and three others, who had continued without in charge of Leonard and Audeley, hurried in, followed by their prisoners.

"Here's an obstinate knave, who knows not

what it is to be civilly entreated," cried the senior Rainer, " so lay hands on him, bullies, and fling him neck and heels on board of the Free Maiden, whither I go not without him."

" I tell you that you must be speedy, Ralph, if you would go at all," observed the brother, " since I know the line is eased off to the last turn, and the ships are yet too close for longer safety ; judging, by the look of all things, I warn you to haste at once on board, if you would not be left where you are."

" Jump on deck, one of ye," cried the leader, " bid them hold on all for one minute or so longer—hail Potter, tell him to lower my shallop from the Maiden, we can pass well enough in that being to leeward, since, between the craft, the water will be unbroken."

As this order was given, the King thrust his legs out from under the covering upon the deck, and now sat upright on the side of the couch, evidently determined on resis-

tance to any attempt made to force him hence. The veins of his neck were swollen with suppressed rage and indignation, and, with his gripe, clutched on the couch-edge on either side, he strove to steady himself against the galley's now violent pitching.

Having issued the last order, Rainer turned once more to the King, adding quickly, "Now handle yon pedlar-knave, and drag him to the boat, for his wits are driven out of him through very fear."

"Slaves! at your souls' peril, touch me not!" shouted the King as they advanced, in a voice which for a moment, drowned the noise of men within, and winds and waves without; at the same time rising, not to his full height, but as nearly so as the deck would permit; whilst, rushing past those between, Audeley and Leonard here threw themselves before him.

"Down with them all, lads, but kill not," bawled Rainer; his brother, Herman, with the word, dashed his whole weight on Aude-

ley, who reeled back against the bulk-head, whilst the King, in making a forward rush, dagger in hand, heedless of the low beam before, struck his temple violently against it, and so losing his balance, was flung heavily across the couch ; with a cat-like spring, Herman Rainer leaped towards him, seeking to throw his whole weight upon the prostrate monarch, when a terrible blow on the throat, from the clenched hand of Leonard, checked his career, and lighting short of his purposed mark, the ruffian tumbled dead on the deck, Leonard himself being in the next moment, struck down upon him, and together with his companions, amidst horrid threats and imprecations, immediately secured.

In the progress of this struggle the little cabin had been unexpectedly filled with soldiers, on whose dark faces there now mingled an expression of consternation and savage fury.

By many tongues was it told how the boat of the Free Maiden had been dashed to shivers against the side, through some mismanagement of Burchen and his unwilling men, and further

that the few of Rainer's crew on deck were crying loudly for his presence, the Zealand mariners being ill inclined to obey their captors; whilst all further communication with the other ship was cut off, and the present danger becoming each minute more imminent from the nature of the gale, at this time increased to fury.

To these, and the like ill tidings, which every tongue came rife with, Rainer returned, for a time, neither sign nor word of reply, but fixedly stood, regarding the prisoners as they were being severally pinioned.

“Is he indeed dead?” was his first eager demand, as the body of his brother was dragged from beneath his slayer; and that question answered in the affirmative, he spoke no word more; but the change which came over the rude man was marvellous. The fixed red colour of his face had fled, and was succeeded by a livid hue; his eyes were glazed, and the expression of his at all times coarse, but not ill-humoured features, was become fearfully devilish.

At length he saw that his prey was fast bound; when, turning to those who urged him to haste, he said—"One moment—all shall be well. Lay him there—on that trim bed," he added, pointing out the couch to those who were lifting the corpse of his brother; "and see ye look well to the safe keeping here of both the living and the dead." This said, without one threatening word, he went forth from the cabin, and crushing his bonnet down over his brow, sprung upon the poop-deck of the labouring galley; here, steadying himself for a minute by the after-rigging, he shaded his eyes with his hand from the sea-drift which filled the air, and quietly cast about him the keen, intelligent look of a true sailor.

If he had, whilst below, considered the state of the weather exaggerated by the reports of the timid and the ignorant, this glance fully sufficed to convince him of his error, and called into immediate action all his best energies.

The wind had, after in turn visiting each quarter of the heavens, become at last fixed in

the south-east, and blew almost a hurricane, stirring the vexed sea, which had, during the last forty hours been impelled in every opposite direction, into an unusual and appalling commotion, that shook the vessel down to her very kelson as she weltered helplessly in its surge, unaided by either sail or oar.

Both these had indeed been abandoned by the proper crew for some time, whose whole efforts, willingly made, were now limited to the most obvious means of present safety, or rather to the mere prolongation of a precarious existence, for they abandoned every other precaution, to employ themselves in baling out the water which constantly kept bursting into the undocked waste, or that space between poop and forecastle properly occupied by the oarsmen. Meantime the sails, ill-furled, were blowing from the ropes which ought to have restrained them on the yards; whilst these latter, in their turn, being unsteadied, were flung about by every motion of the labouring

bark, threatening a speedy destruction of the masts.

Casting his sharp glance to windward, the seaman next made out the Free Maiden, doing comparatively well under the snug sail set by Potter ; whilst handled as she was by his more willing and better experienced crew, he yet perceived, that she was sufficiently occupied in looking to her own safety ; whilst he became equally convinced that all attempt on his part to board her, until the gale should subside, would be madness, and might end in the loss of all.

A short time enabled Rainer to come to this decision ; next summoning Burchen and his crew, he in few words pithily assured them that the only chance for safety depended upon their yielding prompt and cheerful obedience to his orders ; but that obeying these, no harm he could avert should befall them ; adding, in a voice not to be heard and disbelieved, that “the slightest new symptom of mutiny or

backwardness on their parts, should be punished with a quicker passage to the other world than their worst fears even now contemplated.

The men who had boarded the Morning Star with him, were, with the exception of his dead brother and two or three others, soldiers, and unused to ships ; but they were also tried in peril, and accustomed to obey, possessing the energy even amidst these scenes, to do all that strength and manly resolution might accomplish. Directing these men-at-arms, therefore, how to keep the waste clear of water, with a jocular hint that they must stick to the strange task, or cry content to be drowned, Rainer next placed a trusty hand at the helm; and, by voice and active example, had in a little time achieved all that the best cunning of the time could do to secure the ship.

Making just so much sail as rendered the Morning Star obedient, and enabled him to shape a course with the helm, he by degrees succeeded in bringing her safely on the wind,

so as to edge off the land, which he conjectured, must be too near: pursuing this plan, he was at length enabled to pass under the stern of the Free Maiden, and thus, for a minute, coming within hail, he directed Potter, now in command, to bear up at once and run for Rerefonde, whilst, with the Star, which he found was, under proper handling, likely to prove an excellent and weatherly boat, he would himself keep the sea, and look out for the supplies Count Alaine expected under his once page, the now famous Croquart, and the English free-companion Thirlwall.

In obedience to this order the Free Maiden squared away her yards, hoisted more sail, and rolling along before the gale, was quickly borne out of sight; whilst the tight Genoese galley, lying yet closer by the wind, wrestled gallantly, to win her seaward course against the angry surge which boiled around her prow, and with strange hissings, swept beneath the lee.

CHAPTER X.

THROUGH the whole of this rough night did the Morning Star hold a successful encounter with the assailing elements, for it was not until late on the following morning that the wind gradually lessened ; when the low thick clouds, which had too long protracted the almost night's darkness, beginning to rise and disperse, gave to the seamen's anxious eyes a wider range over the waste of chafing water.

As the clouds slowly lifted, the glance of the watchful Rainer became fixed upon a large dark mass that lay most fearfully near, being

directly in his present track, and over which white-top'd seas were evidently rising. "Breakers a-head, right under the leebow," was loudly announced by the look out on the prow.

"Out oars, and see if she may not yet wear round," cried Rainer—"up helm there—haul in upon the weather braces—bend to it good oars and sweep on her—we've still gotten room and to spare—though what stranger rock the devil hath kicked up in our way here I wot not."

The galley fell handsomely off, and, aided by the weather sweeps was wearing readily enough, but as in the performance of this manœuvre they neared the object of their fear, the increasing light enabled them to make out, that, what they had at the first glimpse mistaken for a rock was no other than a large vessel in great extremity. The galley was, therefore, again immediately brought to her course with her larger sails clewed up, and so suffered gradually to approach the distressed ship, which they perceived bore many flags re-

versed on different portions of her rigging, evidently with a hope of catching the notice of those on board the galley, whose proximity the quick sight of despair had early made out.

As the Morning Star approached thus slowly within hail, a cry of "Help, quickly, or we founder!" was borne to them from many tongues; an apprehension which a near view of the stranger ship's condition amply confirmed, since she was already, to all appearance, completely water-logged, and almost every third wave was seen to make a clear breach over her deep waste.

Clustered upon her high poop and forecastle the practised eye of Rainer quickly saw were a thrice greater number of men yet clinging than could by any possibility have been needed for her crew; and from this circumstance, joined to a nearer view, was he immediately led to suspect the ship was no other than one of the convoy he sought to meet. True, a little evasion followed his first questions, but necessity induced frankness, and the hope of rescue inspired confidence;

finally, when Rainer made himself known, he heard his name instantly hailed with a wild hurrah of joy; whilst he quickly learned, in return, that the wreck was the Scorpion, freighted with a band of twenty free lances, led by Captain John Thirlwall, commonly known as the "*Gentle Rider.*"

The speediest means for the rescue were now considered, and, to effect this, great care was needed, since most of those so crowded together were utterly incapable of active exertion in their own behalf; many of them, indeed, being bereft of the power of motion, and only kept upon the wreck by the compactness of the mass they formed a part of; the sea yet ran too high to enable Rainer to approach near enough alongside to enable the stranger crew to pass direct on board from the sinking craft, and boats they had none, even if boats might have lived here.

Seamen, however, are too often exposed to perilous vicissitudes to be easily discouraged, and courage and energy soon supplied an ex-

pedient even in this seeming desperate case, so soon as the crew of the Morning Star became duly apprized who these truly were lying in such peril. Had they been other than "free comrades" like themselves, 'tis probable the ingenuity of the salvors might not have been so closely taxed ; as it was, however, the following course was promptly advised and put in practice.

A light line was, in the first place, attached to a cross-bow bolt, and shot over the wreck, this line being hauled on by those on board capable of so much exertion, conveyed to them a much stronger rope, which, in turn, being made fast, became the medium for the guidance and security of a light catamaran, quickly constructed out of the oars and other available spars on board the Morning Star, and on which frail raft four hardy fellows soon hauled themselves under the lee-quarters of the Scorpion.

Aided by a few of the most active of the benumbed crew, these volunteers, with the help of the sharp axes they bore, cut away so much of the masts as they could get at, and

out of these and other portions of the wreck were enabled to construct a larger raft, on which the rescued men were by degrees safely transported to the deck of their salvors ; and in good time, for the last living cargo was yet floating between the vessels when a cry arose from the Morning Star to “cut away the hawser ;” an order which, although promptly attended to, was hardly effected before the poor worn out Scorpion, first making a heavy roll or two, like some sea monster in his agony, rested for a minute’s space on her beam ends, then turning fairly keel upwards, suddenly rushed down head foremost with a mighty roar ; whilst a few planks, rent from her burst ribs, were seen shooting their dark ends above the eddy as they whirled round and round in the boiling vortex, beneath which the parent wreck lay for ever buried.

Rainer was well known to Thirlwall, for they had served together in more than one desperate foray in the west ; the latter was therefore instantly struck with the restless and

gloomy manner, which had, as it appeared, completely usurped the place of the boisterous and reckless gaiety, common to the character and fixed habits of the man: an inquiry made of a third party, however, in few words put him in possession of the cause, and he sought not to be informed further.

This addition of some thirty souls to the crew of the galley, left but small space for studied accommodation on board; but fortunately the worn survivors of the wreck needed small temptation to repose; stretched close together on the floor of the cabin and fore-castle, these were soon rocked to forgetfulness of their late ill-fortune: viewed as thus they lay, they were, in faith, a wild looking band, and had they been fallen in with by any less liberal or more timid salvors, caution might have outpleaded humanity at sight of them, and they been left to the care of the winds and waters; even now there lay not a man amongst them but was armed with at least one weapon, many wore

two or three, to which, with the instinct of long habit they had clung, when all else they owned was freely abandoned ; and seeing death before them, even in this strange shape, yet they had, as it seemed, prepared to meet it after their wont, with harness on the back, and hand on hilt.

There were amongst these “companions,” men of every land, but the majority was made up of Welsh and Irish, who had become outlaws through different causes ; a variety of which, independent of the love of a free, roving life, were for ever occurring in these days of constant tumult and civil war ; the leader was, evidently, an Englishman, and bore about him, despite the equivocal nature of his service, an air of conserved humanity, and a certain inherent polish of speech and manner, which greatly distinguished him amidst the unmitigated ruffianism of the barbarians he commanded.

Rainer now learned that the Scorpion had sailed from l'Isle de Bas, with the intent of touching at the point, where Barbaroux had

appointed the general rendezvous, when, two days before, they were overtaken with the late heavy gales, which, despite all the exertion they could make, had finally reduced their ship to the wreck they lately left her.

Their horses, and every thing moveable, had, in the struggle to prolong life, been thrown overboard, and they stood here naked men, with their hearts alone uninjured and fit to aid the cause they had espoused ; “ but, doubtless,” concluded Thirlwall, “ the gold of Prince Lewis, and the armoury of Rerefonde, will set us once more forth in seemly trim, since our arms are as stout, and our hearts as sound as ever.”

Informed of Barbaroux’s course, Rainer made known his purpose, first resolving to run straight for Rerefonde, and there landing his prisoners and friends, next make all sail for Cap Gris-nez, to hasten and pilot Barbaroux to that place ; by which time he doubted not Sir Alaine would have himself arrived there.

The day wore on, and it was some hours after noon that the Captain of the Morning Star, summoning all hands, proceeded briefly to make known to them his determination, then and there to consummate his brother's funeral, and his own revenge.

His seamen readily acquiesced in this measure, and urged its immediate execution, but the men-at-arms and bowmen belonging to the Count, were on their parts something startled by the penalty proposed, since as they said they had received from Father Mathieu, the strictest charge not to molest the prisoners, or otherwise offer them more personal outrage than might be called for, in order to their safe keeping.

To quiet these scruples, therefore, Rainer requested Thirlwall to suffer three or four of his men to act as guards on the occasion, for he swore no power on earth should hold him from revenging his brother's death, or, as he termed it, his 'murder.'

The taking away life on such an occasion,

and amongst such men, was too every-day a matter to call forth much question from uninterested parties, more especially in a case where an ally was to be obliged or conciliated. The *Gentle Rider*, therefore, without a scruple, coolly directed his fellows to act as guards or aids, as it might happen, in Rainer's act of justice; whilst the scrupulous men-at-arms quieted their consciences by resolving merely to remain passive, where fear of their master would not allow of their taking an active part; to which inclination would certainly have led them; as they all in a greater or less degree, shared the revengeful feeling of Rainer, and lamented their lost comrade, whose youth, convivial good humour, bold heart, and light wit, had made him a general favourite; and, indeed, Herman had qualities which under honester guidance, might have stood him in higher stead.

This point at rest, with a coolness and deliberation which excited the surprise of all who knew him—since it was at utter vari-

ance with his general habit—Rainer ordered the preparations for the solemn enactment of the barbarity he had conceived and dwelt on during the hours of the past night: with eternity before his eyes had he arranged and perfected his resolved sacrifice; and, stimulated by the one horrid thought, had toiled—aye, and prayed too, with more than common fervour—to the end that he might live to consummate this act of vengeance.

It was on the afternoon, then, of this same day, that the companions of Thirlwall, having been well refreshed by both rest and food, were mustered and disposed to the best advantage, in order to assist at the purposed ceremony, the preparations for which were carried on with a minute observance of all due form and ceremonial.

Ranged in order along the thwarts of the waste sat the Scorpion's crew; the forecastle was kept by Sir Alaine's cross-bowmen; and underneath this were penned up Burchen, and the seamen, properly the crew of the

Morning Star ; the place of honour on the poop-deck was held by a few of Thirlwall's band ; and on it were likewise congregated the superiors of both parties.

When all were thus mustered, the purpose they were called upon to grace was in a few, but impressive words, made known to them by Rainer ; and though there were many here, already blackened to the soul with guilt, familiar with all iniquities, and ever ready for fresh crime, having present gratification or future profit in view, yet could not even such men forbear a shudder, on hearing the declared intent of Rainer, to fling his brother's corse into the vast unhallowed grave rolling beneath them ; this too, without one note of preparation for his soul, from holy book or holy bell. One or two of the most influential persons present, ventured, on this point, to make remonstrance even, but vainly ; amongst these Thirlwall strongly advised, that he should, past doubt, for very decency, bear his brother's body to the land, whither the following morning could

hardly fail to bring them, and there have it laid within the church's shadow, however he might now choose to deal upon the murderer.

“Herman Rainer,” answered the resolved man, after listening doggedly to all which had been urged by his more superstitious friends, “shall lie here, beneath the waves on which he was nurtured, lived, and died—he shall be sunk as deep as this iron grapping can sink; and within his fast-hold shall also lie anchored there, the man that slew him: 'tis a likely chance now that one or other of these dark days I, too, may share this same roomy grave; until that time comes, and whilst I rove these waters, not a wave will rise beneath my prow, but I shall be reminded of this place of rest, and of *him* from whose bosom it may have been up-heaved—no drop of the spray-sleet will fall upon the deck we for so many years trod together, but I shall again fancy *him* by my side; and if the wail of the night-wind reminds me that he watches no longer there, I will hear in it also the dying groan of his mur-

derer, and shall remember that at least my brother was revenged."

Penned within the narrow cabin, where they were secured by Rainer's orders, Edward and his two young followers remained during this time, in undisturbed companionship with the dead Herman ; here were they, at least, free to whisper their sad thoughts each to the other, and the King, although naturally much enraged by this detention and rough handling, was yet enabled to ward off the worst apprehension, of this violence being the result of a concerted plot against his liberty, since the very rudeness of the treatment dealt to them served to convince him that his person was happily unknown. At first he had, indeed, meditated sending for the pirate leader, and, disclosing his real name, endeavour, by large offer of ransom, to induce him to make for Sluys ; the chance of being, through the very fear of the wretches, delivered up, helpless as he was, to the wily Philip of France, or his aspiring son of Normandy, had for a time

restrained him, when soon after, some words which were caught from those on watch without, taught him to know that silence would still be the most prudent course, since he at least thus gathered that his keepers were not the friends of Artevelde or England.

The shrill, whistling sound of the wind amongst the strained cordage, and the continuous roaring of the hungry sea, as the good galley rode bravely over it, told to the wakeful prisoners that the storm raged with unabated fury during the hours of darkness: other information they had none, save the few fearful words caught through the bulk-head. They were likewise aware that two men kept watch without their door, as they heard the reliefs regularly brought, but all direct interrogations put to these fellows, were either unheard or unheeded, at least no word of answer could be won from them.

With the daylight, which they were tolerably supplied with, came at least a piece of fortune that enabled them to render their situ-

ation more tolerable ; for, under the edge of the couch they espied the dagger which, falling from the King's grasp when he struck his head against the beam, had rolled here, and so escaped notice. By a skilful use of this, the cords which bound the arms of the monarch were first cut, and this done, he in turn so loosened the bonds of his companions, that they sat lightly enough upon them to be readily shook off if a chance for action occurred, yet, without close inspection, remained to the eye much as they had been left by their gaolers. Soon after came the bustle attendant upon the rescue of the survivors of the *Scorpion*'s wreck, and with it hopes which were doomed too quickly to be dispelled, or succeeded by those delusions, brighter often, but false also, which, at times come to us, gilding even the uneasy sleep of anxiety and apprehension with a taste of bliss no waking reality of joy can ever parallel : for, lulled by the comparative quiet that followed this event, the cessation of the elemental war, together with the ease af-

forged by the present adjustment of their bonds, our prisoners had happily fallen into a deep slumber, from the which, after some hours' continuance, they were at last roused by the noisy entrance within their cabin of those of Thirlwall's band appointed to prepare and remove the body of Herman Rainer, who proceeded in their task without bestowing the slightest notice on those whom they had thus unwelcomely roused from dreams, perhaps, of home and freedom, to have their fearful captivity confirmed by the actual presence of their ruffian guards.

Tearing down a portion of the velvet hangings which clothed the planking of the sides, these singular undertakers carefully enveloped the body within its soft folds, with the exception of the face, which they left to its ghastly nakedness, winding about this costly shroud the silken cords which had draped up the removed hangings.

This strange preparation—of the purposed end of which no hint was dropped by the

actors—being completed, the corpse was next carefully raised from the gilded couch and borne outward; at the same time two men in motioning to Leonard, bade him “rise and follow.” Questions were useless, resistance hopeless; to obey the only alternative left; but whilst calmly rising to this intent, Leonard bent his ear for one moment, on a motion from his master.

“Should they meditate the last violence,” he whispered quickly, “call openly upon me, and so let us play the last chance for life, if not for freedom.”

Leonard bowed his deep-felt acknowledgements upon the hand of his royal master, and with tears of pride and gratitude glistening in his eyes, followed his guards in silence, but with a firmly made inward resolution to die as cruel a death as his ruffian captors could devise, rather than win security by risking the delivery of England’s king, thus shamefully bound, into the hands of his enemies.

As he was slowly ascending to the poop-

deck, the prisoner gazed with wondering and dazzled eyes at the scene around and near him. The late turbulent and rebellious uplifting of the waves was already quelled ; they now coursed one another onward in unbroken succession, meekly obedient to the steady south-west wind that blew ; the summer sun was slowly sinking down to rest, upon the bed of clouds which awaited to receive him, encircled by a frame of living gold, resting air-borne, within a sky as bright and ruddy as the sun himself at early morning ; such of the far distant wave-tops as had already caught the light of his descending rays, were seen throwing their heads above their unblest fellows, heaving and swelling as if endowed with life, and vaunting thus the silver diadems with which the God so gloriously had crowned them.

Contrasted with the lovely aspect which all nature bore without, were the dark, stern looks of the cruel men within—men in whose faces one made lynx-eyed by fear, had searched in vain to have found a sign of hope, or

ray of mercy. Turning his glance from the more distant crew, Leonard observed nearer to him five or six of the seeming superiors of the fierce band, whilst a little way further aft, he beheld a group busied in making fast a stout rope having a heavy iron grappling attached to it, to the body of the dead Rainer ; crossways beneath which were also being passed several lines cut to an equal length, and placed at equal distance from the neck downward to the ankles.

All were for a few moments silent, not a sound was heard, except the hollow rush of the sea coursing after the ship, as, on an even keel she floated under easy sail before the breeze. Leonard looked upon these singular preparations with a mixed sensation of intense curiosity, and anxious, ill-defined horror that froze his inmost soul, and shook with involuntary dread a heart not formed to quail before any danger which might be openly encountered by a man. These worst moments of suspense were, however, soon over.

“ All is now clear for a long run, Captain,”

cried one of those assisting in the preparation we have described, addressing himself to Rainer, who during this time had stood apart leaning over the taffrail; but with his glance, which followed that one word "ready," the full horrid certainty of the use those lines and that anchor was designed for, burst upon the helpless prisoner.

"Cast off the lashing from his wrists, then," cried Rainer, coolly, stepping nearer to Leonard, and eyeing him close, "loose him, I say, and let me look upon the hand that killed Herman Rainer with such an unthought-for—such a coward blow."

"You lie in the heart, sea robber," indignantly said Leonard; "I smote him on the throat, whilst in the act of assailing one I was bound with my life to shield from the contamination of such rascal touch; I smote him in the front, as I would you, or the best cut purse at your back, were my hand again as free as it was when it punished justly him that lies here."

"It shall be free enough, and soon enough,

doubt not," answered Rainer, with a fiendish smile: " hither with that axe, Rees, and see if ye cannot set free the hand that slew Herman ; the which hand being so freed, shall hang nailed to my mast, as a warning to all peddling knaves who, for love of their pelf, dare venture to bide blow with warriors—men, whom for no end else, would they dare to look upon."

Leonard, as he heard this order, grew sick with despair, shuddering visibly ; it was only when he felt the hands of his guards upon him, that he fully recovered voice and perception of his condition ; then, whilst struggling desperately to free himself, he exclaimed—

" Nay, if ye be soldiers, men, take not away my right hand from me !—ye shall have gold enough to make ye free for ever, wealth enough to buy the souls of a thousand better men than him I slew, only leave me not a cripple, a helpless thing for life, kill me rather thrice over."

" Do not doubt it," said Rainer in that deep

guttural tone which had taken place of his once loud and blustering manner, at the same time pointing with ~~his~~ finger to where the body of his brother lay, stretched upon the cords which protruded for ~~about~~ two feet beyond on either side, “seest thou that corpse? those outstretched arms, within whose man-like gripe thou ~~wouldst~~, had he been living, writhed like a hurt worm?—even within those dead arms shalt thou here be bound, within them to sink beneath the sea, on which ye here swim together, within them to wither on the sands below, 'till such time as yonder good cordage shall fail to keep your mouldering bones together.”

The speaker ceased, and not one murmur of disapproval rose from the assembled men, who heard this sentence, so revoltingly cruel. The wretched youth cast one look about him, but the unspoken, yet certain answer was, “*despair!*” His eye at last, met the glance of Rainer, fixed with a most fiendlike scrutiny upon his features, and, heartened by this look, the native pride and spirit of his soul revived.

“ ‘Tis well, he cried, better even so to die linked to yon son of felony and murder, than be left to linger out existence, deprived of the power of taking a man’s revenge on my coward butchers—come, I am ready.”

With this defiance was he led a few paces nearer the break of the poop, athwart which ran a stout rail, supported by solid stanchions; near to one of these stood a brawny looking ruffian, having a short axe leaning over his bared arm, evidently prepared to give at a word the blow.

“Soho! here is a costly ring on this doomed hand may just as well fall to a good fellow’s share, as be left to glisten against Rainer’s main-mast—eh, bullies ?” here whispered the fellow most actively employed in removing the cords from Leonard’s wrists; the discovery was received with a half smothered laugh, whilst carefully drawing the jewel from the prisoner’s passive finger, the speaker continued: “By ye’re leave, my brave lad, we, as well as any else; so, so—there we are!—now, captain,

do you hold this good prize for us four here, mind, and none others; we'll maintain the right of possession **against** all grumblers: 'tis the hangman's fee, and all we're like to get by this odd fancied job of Ralph Rainer's."

So concluding, the fellow slipped the trinket into the hand of Thirlwall, who had latterly, by degrees pressed closer to the group thus employed, keeping at the same time his look fixed upon our hero, with an expression of intense curiosity if not of rising pity.

His hands released from the cords, Leonard advanced close to the rail in question, and here, requesting to be left free, cast a smile of withering contempt upon Rainer who leaned near the executioner, as he unflinchingly thrust forth his arm, placing his wrist right upon the stanchion-head—with this act, a low murmur of admiration extorted by his firmness, rose from out the deep waste where sat the band of Thirlwall, whilst many of Sir Alaine's followers, here turned away their heads.

The axe was raised by the executioner

with both hands, the dull eye of the brute brightened, as he fixed it upon his mark; for one moment he poised the weapon—

“Stay the blow” was shouted, or rather screamed forth at this very moment, but all too late, for down came, like lightning, the well intentioned blow, and so deep into the tough oak was the sharp blade driven, it was not by any immediate exertion of the confounded fellow's to be again withdrawn.

CHAPTER XI:

DESPITE that late cry of warning, the blow fell as has been seen,—but it fell not on the wrist of Leonard; from the spot where he stood, rooted by the strong power of a resolved mind, he felt himself, at that last moment, forcibly jerked back, by an arm of iron, and, instead of his executioner, beheld by his side, a tall swart looking man, in whose every feature was kindled a wild curiosity, together with the extreme of breathless agitation.

A moment's silence had succeeded the hollow sound of the fallen blow; but this was im-

mediately followed by loud and reiterated roars of laughter, from the lookers on, who witnessed the confused and precipitate endeavours of the baffled executioner, to extract his deep sunk blade; the handle of which he leaned over, and tugged up, but alike in vain.

“What means this ill timed frolic of yours?” demanded Rainer, drawing near to Thirlwall, a circle of his followers gradually forming round him—with this movement, all eyes were bent in the like direction.

“For one moment, Rainer,” cried Thirlwall, endeavouring to curb the overpowering tremor which shook his manly frame, and rendered his first sentence hardly articulate, “I—I have a word or two to put to this youth.”

“The briefer the better,” sharply retorted Rainer, “we must not lose time, for 'tis sunset, and, see you, comrade, I would have his last light shine on my full revenge.”

He turned hastily aside, towards the taffrail, but evidently bursting with ill restrained an-

ger ; whilst, heedless of him, or of aught but the being before him, Thirlwall went on, demanding hastily—

“ Speak, what is your name ? who are you ? ”

“ My name,” replied the bewildered Leonard, “ is *Borgia*—I am a citizen of London ? ”

“ *Borgia* ! ” repeated the questioner, with increasing energy and haste, “ heard I right ? said you *Borgia* was your name ? ”

Leonard repeated the word.

“ Aye, 'tis so, well—” continued Thirlwall, “ and your father—kinsman, or I know not what he called himself, was the wealthy gold-worker of Lombard-street, was he not ? ”

“ And is so still—mine uncle you mean ? ” replied Leonard.

“ *Is*, said you ? then does he yet live in England ? or where is he now ? ” demanded the man with startling rapidity of utterance.

“On board of this ship,” replied Leonard, mechanically replying to the last question, scarce conscious of what he said.

“Here, on board this ship!” repeated Thirlwall, with new surprise, “then must I see him.”

“That must you not, nor shall not,” cried Rainer, just catching the last sentence, as he was about breaking in—with every feature swollen by suppressed excitement, continuing—“beware, Thirlwall! trifle no longer with my justice here; be warned whilst all is yet well—cast your hands off my prisoner, and sink this idle mummery.”

“Rainer, hear me,” said Thirlwall, affecting in turn a calmness which he felt not, placing himself before Leonard as he spoke, “I consented willingly to your working your wild will on one by whose hand, as I thought, you had unfairly lost a brother you loved—but this is a bold lad, and for my sake you must quit him of the penalty, since what is done

is done, and as it appears your brother fell not as you thought, by foul means."

"Thirlwall," answered Rainer, with an ill-worn look of courtesy, "it is thou art deceived; I again tell thee, he struck him—most foully struck him, with no soldier weapon; this too after I had given to him and his, assurance that no bodily harm was meant to them, he felled Herman Rainer, as, unthinking, he lightly leaped by him to do my bidding, when the safety of all here hung on a minute—felled him then, as the coward flesher fells the soothed bull, that in his roused might, he had as soon faced the devil as but looked on."

"'Twas a luckless blow," interrupted Thirlwall in a conciliatory tone—"yet will you take ransom for this hot boy—come, let me parley with the uncle, he is rich, and——"

"John Thirlwall, stop!" interrupted Rainer in his turn, with increasing wildness of speech and gesture—"you but waste time—you talk

to a sworn man : look upon those waves which encompass us—bid them go back before your lightest breath : look on yon setting sun—turn to it, and, with uplifted finger, stay the setting : call to the passing breeze—bid it to veer about, and lay these bellying sails against the masts ! Do all this, yet after, think not to buy the blood of Herman Rainer with gold !

“ Listen, John Thirlwall, comrade, listen—*he* was the youngest child of my mother : I lifted him from off her dead breast—a pithless boy—on that night when, after three years of absence, I saw my native town set on fire at the four corners by him I followed, and found my widowed mother murdered by the comrades for whom I had so often struck ; 'twas unwittingly done, I know ; a chance arrow, I was told—but no matter : there, before these eyes she lay !—lay there in her blood, and within her arms, clasped in the close lock of death, lay her youngest born !

“ From that cursed hour I reared that boy ; from that cursed night we parted not ; by

land and by sea we were together. On the red deck, when I fought, he was my surest shield ; in the gale when I slept, he was my surest watch ; he loved me ; I never loved other living thing ; and never did other being, save only his poor mother, love me. See, here, where he lies—dead—murdered ! and now, hear, again :—if, to save him that stands here, was brought me all the gold which rascal trader ever yet gathered without having the soul to enjoy, I would spurn it then, as I now do your proffer : whilst this sea bears the gold of others, neither I, nor those who swim with me, shall ever lack enough of it, to purchase such pleasures as gold may buy, when they fall in the way—more I seek not—so much, good steel will ever win.”

He ceased to speak, and his words were followed by a shout of approval from his followers.

“ Yet, Rainer,” urged Thirlwall, “ for a comrade’s sake, who——”

The sailor pressed forward, with an evident

design himself to seize his prey ; whilst, with an impetuous angry burst, Thirlwall thrust forth his brawny right arm to its full length, continuing aloud—

“ Hold off ! for, by all the saints of Heaven, he shall have no bodily hurt.”

“ By the fiends of hell,” retorted Rainer, “ his soul, within an hour, shall be in their keeping ! Give way, Thirlwall ; or I’ll cancel the bond you owe me for your life to-day, and stab you on my deck, where you stand.”

They both hastily drew with this threat, and many others as promptly did the like : but even here there were some of a more sober nature, who threw themselves between, staying blows, and loudly beseeching that the lives of all, besides a great cause, might not be periled, through so light a matter.

Rainer was now, however, fairly mad with fury, and only by brute force might longer be restrained ; during his frantic curses, and his struggle with those who thus sought to stay him, a cry arose from many to remove the occasion

of dispute by tossing the prisoner overboard to his fate—a decision which, barbarous as it was, would most likely have been soon put in execution, only that, at this crisis, was heard a sudden crash below, succeeded by loud cries, which as suddenly ceased.

The attention of all on deck was in a moment drawn to this strange noise ; but before any movement could be made, the two prisoners from the after-cabin—the senior armed with the heavy sword of the slain sentinel, and the youngest bearing a dagger wet to the hilts with fresh gore—bounded from below, and both sprung on to one of the nearest thwarts, left vacant through its first occupant having mounted to the poop to take part in the gathering broil. At this unexpected, strange apparition, from all sides cries rang and weapons flashed, although few there, had they been questioned, could have told wherefore, or to what end, they drew ; whilst Rainer, still foaming with rage, as his eye fell upon the King, called out, “ Lay hold on that madman !—Ho ! you on the fore-

castle there, drive your bolts through both, if they loose not their weapons."

"Draw not a string, on your souls' peril!" shouted Leonard; at the same moment Thirlwall, having gazed intently on the King, whispered—"Waste no word more, but follow :" then, together with Leonard, leaped over the railing, and kneeling by the side of the supposed merchant, whilst the strangeness of this act caught every eye and silenced every tongue, he solemnly called out—

"Liege men of England, behold your sovereign, King Edward! Here he stands; and, if needs be, those who are for Thirlwall must strike with him come what may. Outlaws although we are," he rapidly continued, "let us now only remember that we were born his lieges, and that our Lord stands here in need of loyal service."

"The King!" cried Rainer, bending curiously over—"The King!" echoed many an eager voice.

“It is true,” replied Edward, with a nobleness of manner not to be questioned, tossing the hood back from off his thick auburn hair as he spoke—“I am Edward of England; and although the King has been somewhat over freely dealt with on board this ship, yet will we here, since it is plain ye knew us not, quit you of the outrage, so you instantly yield all to mercy, and run us quickly for the port of Sluys; but, if ye fail in accepting this grace, or persist in your contumacy, by the word of a king, which may not be broken, ye shall hang in clusters by the Thames' mouth, as scarecrows to fright all pirates and plunderers from out the four seas.”

“The King of England,” replied Rainer, nothing daunted by this name, before the mere sound of which he readily saw that many of the rudest here were cowed down as by a spell; “by God's crown, comrades, a right noble prize, and worthy harder blows than we have yet come by in the winning of it.” Then turning to Edward, he continued, in a tone of singular

audacity, not unmixed with the coarse humour which was natural to him—

“ Be you not rash, Sir King ; we sailors are rough, unmanaged fellows, unlearned in land fashions and owning no land rulers on the waves. *Here* I am king be it known to you ; this ship is my royalty, these good fellows my subjects, bound here to do my bidding ; and if amongst them there be any craven or rebellious, we have both the will and the power to be quickly rid of them by a short road, and one over rough to walk far on. We have found you, Sir King—if king you be, which I believe not—a waif upon the blue waters, the which we share in sovereignty with some brother princes like to ourselves ; to us too have ye been already rendered, ‘rescue or no rescue’—therefore be advised by me and keep your royal word, or, by the blood, your kingship will be sore jeopardied, and we must henceforth hold your heir our debtor.”

During this, Thirlwall had not failed to avail himself of the time occupied by Rainer : with a

significant look or gesture, he had quietly communicated with those on whom he knew he could under all hazards rely; but the moments, he also felt, were most critical, for some who, at the first had wavered, were already ashamed of their panic fear, whilst, by the bold free use made of the awful word “King,” by Rainer, the resolute were confirmed: added to this, Count Alaine’s followers well knew, that once disarmed, their chance of pardon would be small, besides, they were now sufficiently acquainted with their lord’s plans to be quite aware of the great value of the prize which fortune had thus placed within their grasp. Amongst the Irish and Welsh also, were many who held the English name in any thing but love or reverence, and others, who, at any time, cared little on which side they struck, so the end promised equal profit.

Thirlwall knew all this; he beheld also, that the crisis was arrived when one good blow struck was better than fifty words spoken, he judged the temper of his own band from experience, and

that his example, which they had been accustomed to follow when blows were a-foot, would be the most likely way to decide the question, as far as concerned them ; waving, therefore, his sword about his head, as Rainer was concluding his address, he shouted, with a cheerful voice,

“ A Thirlwall for the King !—to the rescue, my souls of steel !” then, springing with the last word up the steps, at whose head Rainer stood, with the most forward of his party banded in close consultation, Thirlwall aimed at the sailor a heavy blow, which the latter, stepping nimbly aside, avoided ; at the same time giving back one in return, which, had it not been parried by the rigging, would have, in that minute, ended Thirlwall and the royal cause.

“ Villain !” shouted the surprised Rainer, as he again sought to strike ; “ down with the thankless traitor !”

But Thirlwall had, by the suddenness of this active movement, gained a footing on the poop,

where, in a moment, Edward was beside him, loudly echoing his war-cry of “A Thirlwall for the King !”

The *mélee* which followed in this small space baffles all attempt at regular description : the few followers of Thirlwall, who were already fortunately upon the poop, having understood his foregone signals, now fell boldly on the rear of Rainer’s adherents—a diversion most happily timed, since the best of these being chiefly banded here, they fought fiercely and together ; for well they knew the struggle, on their part at least, was now for life or death.

The space was soon however so crowded, by the quick coming in of those of the Scorpion’s crew who could scramble out of their places in the waste, and gain a footing on the poop, that all attempts at guiding a free blow became baffled by the density of this living mass heaving and pressing together, and the fight became for a few minutes a mere brute grapple ; but soon many heavy and quick-sounding plashes in the dark waves, told of the means employed to clear the cumbered deck of those

who strove here—and then wild shrieks, and calls for help, or rescue, rose from out the sea—and names of comrades were vainly appealed to for life by struggling wretches, whose gurgling cries were drowned in the war-shouts and execrations of the yet busy combatants above.

As the parties were by this ready expedient quickly thinned, they became more easily defined, and their division was soon rendered complete by a well-conceived *ruse* of Rainer's; for, suddenly bracing his main-yard round to a sharp angle, he caused it to be lowered by the run till it rested upon the rough trees of the poop on either side, so hemming up the King's defenders in the small space left between the fallen sail and the starboard half of the poop-rail which the yard crossed, forming a barrier for his own party, behind which they rallied, shouting for aid to the cross-bowmen yet in the forecastle; these had hitherto been compelled to rest in idle observance of the fight, prevented from joining their friends by the in-

tervention of Thirlwall's men, in possession of the waste, and not daring to shoot into the press, where the dim light prevented the distinction of friend from foe. The present *ruse* effected by Rainer, having freed them from this difficulty, his voice was instantly heard, crying—

“ Now, cross-bows, level smartly, drop a handful of bolts into the knaves' pen we've made here!—spare not king or peer!—shoot fast and free.”

The situation of the King's party was now embarrassing in the extreme; the lowered yard yet swung before them above breast high, and they being to leeward, the ungathered sail continued fiercely flapping about them, an annoyance which was increased by their efforts to clear it away with their swords; already had two or three bolts splintered the very mast against which Edward clung, dealing an occasional blow over this barrier, against such as were hardy enough to approach near it, or dragging from amongst the folds of the unruly canvass some one of his friends who yet

lay entangled there, several having been thrown down by the sudden fall of the heavy yard.

Three or four of their men were already sped by these missiles, when Leonard, seeing the necessity of risking all to check this dangerous diversion, called on a few of the boldest here to follow; rapidly crossed the waste, and leaped like lightning, sword in hand, amidst the cross-bows.

The suddenness of the attack did much, but numbers must have prevailed, after this first surprise, had not the Flemish mariners, confined below, burst through the bulk-head on to the fore-castle, headed by Claus Burchen, and here joining themselves to Leonard's party, aided to overpower the thus outnumbered cross-bows of Sir Alaine.

Returning with this accession of force to the poop, Leonard fairly hewed a passage through the tough gathers of the sail, and fiercely charging the enemy under their own barrier, on the opposite side to that occupied by his friends, by this unlooked-for assault speedily decided the now every way unequal conflict.

Thirlwall, together with the King and his esquires, both of whom were slightly wounded, now promptly busied themselves in restoring order throughout the ship, securing the few yet living, as prisoners, for future questioning, and committing the dead to the sea, to whose depths so many of both parties had already been consigned alive.

Rainer had fallen nearly the last ; he was slain outright, fighting on his knees by the body of his brother, and breathed his death-gasp in the endeavour to encircle it within his arms ; the cords so methodically arranged with the intention of binding the living to the dead, were now, by the direction of Thirlwall, employed in the less repulsive office of uniting the remains of these rude lovers ; and, thus enfolded in the embrace of death, they were decently lowered into the element on which they had lived so long, and in whose bosom it was evidently their desire, being dead, to rest for ever.

Claus Burchen, who had played so happy a part in the most critical minute of the late

desperate affray, was, happily, unhurt ; and his share of the late mysterious events having been satisfactorily explained to the King, his ship was once more placed under his command, with orders to make direct for Sluys.

All things were, at length, reduced to something like regularity, and the decks cleared of every one save those of the appointed watch, amongst whom both Audeley and Leonard insisted on taking their station : the night came on calm as might be wished by storm-wearied men—the land lay bold beneath the lee, and all matters promised such amends as fortune yet might make to those she had, for the last few hours, so rudely handled.

The King, at length, was prevailed upon by Audeley, to quit the deck, the night wearing so promising an aspect ; and, having entered alone within his cabin, so late his prison, was yet busied in washing from his hands the foul stains left there, to witness how recklessly he had mingled in the close fight, when suddenly he heard the door sliding softly behind

him, and turning hastily, beheld the light of the lamp falling full on the dark, striking features of his late defender, who, unbonnetted, with his uplifted hands locked together, kneeled upon the most distant part of the floor.

“ How now ? ” cried the King, raising the lamp from off the table—“ Thirlwall ! —what seekest thou here, and in that posture ? —speak, man, what wouldest thou have of me ? ”

“ Pardon, Sire ! —pardon ! ” articulated the soldier, in a low, broken tone.

“ By our Ladye,” cried Edward, “ that is a voice so unlike to his, who, but a minute back, I heard shouting to my rescue with the force of a trumpet blast, that, did not mine eyes serve thee better than mine ears, I would forswear thee for that same stout comrade—tut, man, get on thy feet and fear not ; thy slips were heavy, indeed, but we could strain a point to grant them free pardon, after this day’s proven loyalty, and bloody service done—I here do promise, on——”

“ Hold, Sire ! ” exclaimed the man, hastily,

with increasing agitation, “ your Grace must not be trapped into the yielding a forgiveness, you may hereafter repent of having accorded ; on which terms I would not consent to hold your pardon. You must first hear my true name, and *know* me, before the word of mercy is pronounced.”

“ Hah !” cried the King, approaching, and surveying him more narrowly, “ in God’s name, good fellow, no mystery more—we have latterly known over much of that ;—speak then out, and honestly confess, if thou wilt, thy name and crimes, since surely we know thee not.”

“ You have, then, forgotten my lineaments, Sire, although you were once familiar with them, as I have, happily, this day proved myself mindful of yours. In the broken man who now kneels at your Grace’s foot, to live or die upon your word, you behold the attainted traitor, and priced outlaw, **Johan de Maltravers.**”

For a minute’s space the King remained

mute and pale, gazing upon this attainted abettor of his father's murder; then stretching forth his shuddering hand, with a repulsive gesture, he replied—

“Out, miserable man!—out, and hide thee from my sight! thou hast saved my life—take thine from my hands, but fly, and never let me see thee more.”

“Hear me first—for the love of Christ's mother, I charge you to hear me!” fervently exclaimed Maltravers, flinging his body before the King's feet, as he sought to pass outward.

Edward paused; his eyes encountered those of the suppliant, and he beheld that those fierce eyes were blinded with gushing tears! It was a sight that might have wrought compassion on a harder heart: Edward hesitated—looked again—then turned, and seating himself upon the couch, replied—

“How can I listen to thee, who—but in Jesu's name say on, since I cannot deny thee.”

“Sire,” continued Maltravers, yet abiding upon his knees, with clasped hands, and a look of intense earnestness, “you see here one who owed life, nay more, a father’s life to Roger Mortimer; he contrived our escape that time both were betrayed to death by Hugh Spencer, for refusing to connive at the shame of a near kinswoman. In time after, out of deep gratitude to him, and in defence of your Queen-mother, who I was taught to believe cruelly dealt by, I, in conjunction with many wiser and better men, took arms against the King, and was surely one of the many who pushed him from his seat, and thereby placed him in the power of those by whom he was so bloodily murdered. But of that murder, either by connivance or actual deed, I am innocent as yourself.

“I swear this, Sire—swear it on the cross of this sword, which has this day been so long before me; I swear it by my own soul—by the soul of the mother that gave me being; and, if you think my present service worth so

much pains-taking, I beseech you in return to examine yourself the proofs of my innocence, in all but on those points to which I have confessed ; and even to those I was less prycked by malice against him I injured, than by the strong love and gratitude I bore to one, whose courage had bound me in so vast a debt.”

“ I must do so much in very justice,” gravely answered the King, moved by the strong passion of the outlaw Baron ; “ since, if that which you avouch can be made to appear, you are the injured—I the unjust. In sad truth this is a matter hath been perchance over much left to the guidance of others, for never have I loved to hear of it ; but to you, Sir Johan de Maltravers, we are too much beholden to refuse the revival of even this hateful subject—so, in heaven’s name, say on, and right glad shall we be if in conscience we can quit you of this, as, from our inmost heart, we here pardon you all else done against us, for the love of our unhappy mother.”

CHAPTER XII.

WE will not enter upon the detail of the defence set forth by Sir Johan de Maltravers, as we must henceforth call Thirlwall, since our story can in no way be advanced by so doing ; suffice it that, when he left the royal cabin, he stepped forth an unattainted man, with free right to lift again his house's ancient banner, and wear his knightly spurs, unchallenged for aught of his past treasons or misdemeanours, and further that, to the surprise of all men, he from this time remained well in the King's trust and nearest confidence.

The bearing of Maltravers towards our hero continued to smack of the wildness and mystery of his first lucky notice of him ; in the dead of this same night, when all was still, the careful watch at quarters, and these two pacing the deck together, he abruptly dropped the present matter of their converse, and, in a lower tone, began—

“ Methinks thou saidst, some while back, that thine uncle was on board here ?”

“ The King,” replied Leonard, “ was then known as mine uncle.”

“ But, of a sober truth, I pray ye tell me—does the old man himself—*he* of Lombard-street, I mean—yet live, and in England ?”

“ *He* yet lives—and in Lombard-street.”

“ ‘Tis very strange !” muttered Maltravers.

“ What is so strange ?” enquired Leonard, with a smile, “ that mine uncle should yet live ?”

“ Nay, not exactly so ; but tell me—how long have you lived with him ?”

“ That,” replied Leonard, “ can I not tell you.”

“ And wherefore not ?”

“ Because the time goes further back than my memory serves me.”

“ Um !—and this ring, which I have here luckily saved for you, was—you say ?”

“ Was placed on my finger, some three days agone, by mine uncle ; for the ransom of which, as well as of my life, I must rest your debtor, until I hear from Messer Borgia, who, I doubt not, will enable me nobly to requite you ; for myself, I am too poor to give you aught but present thanks, since, in that ring, I fancy you possess all the inheritance bequeathed to me by my father.”

“ Ha ! then he did tell you—” eagerly demanded Maltravers, “ that this ring was given you by your *father* ?”

“ And as such, charged me to prize it.”

“ He did well ” continued the Knight, “ since here at least even now I could be sworn he told you the truth.”

“ My good uncle never affirms aught but the truth, rely on it,” retorted Leonard.

“ I know not that, but we shall see soon ; meantime, here is your ring, and, in return, all I seek is to be allowed the privilege of dealing with you as a grave elder friend, to the which I have some further claim, since, as I suspect, your father was well known to me.”

“ I owe you too much on my own account, and yet more on the account of others here, to be ever less than friend to you ; as you shall surely find, if the hour for proof ever arrives.”

So saying, Leonard frankly tendered his right hand, the which Sir Johan as heartily grasped, replying :—“ I in no way doubt this, and thus accept your pledge.”

The coming in of Audeley, to take his turn of the night-watch, interrupted further private converse ; after a short time, therefore, Leonard retired to his place of repose, close before the King’s cabin-door, and slept soundly here till he was awakened by some tumult over head,

and heard the voice of the King bidding him to rouse. Starting to his feet, his hand was already on the hilt of his weapon, when a word from his master, who stood by smiling at his alarm, stayed the motion ; listening, he heard distinctly the tongue of Audeley without, proclaiming that they were fairly anchored ; and, following to the deck, found that they had indeed quitted the main ocean for the shelter of the long winding sluice, whence the port they sought derives its name, and there dropped anchor to await the next flood tide to proceed to the town, about five miles distant ; whilst, in conclusion, to the very wish of the King, Claus Burchen, from the mast-head, joyously proclaimed that a barge, bearing the flag of the Ruward, was already in sight, coming down the sluice, and rowing briskly for their anchorage.

Great, indeed, was the surprise of Artevelde, who expected to meet his daughter only, when, on gaining the side of the galley, his first greeting sounded from the lips of his

royal friend and ally ; and right joyful were their mutual salutations, after so much of danger passed on one side and anxiety on the other.

Retiring within that small cabin, whose narrow limits had already been the scene of such strange events, the King gave orders that for no cause whatever, should his privacy be approached or intruded on : here then were all the past events explained, and here were clearly shewn by the politic Ruward the means through whose help he hoped, by an unthought for stroke, to tear from its present nominal possessor the sovereignty of the states of Flanders, and vest it, together with the power which belonged to it, in the person of the young Edward of Wales.

The intended invasion of England, so well diverted by the present infall of the Earl of Derby from Guienne, was also thought for, together with a full disclosure of the names of many of the King's foreign retainers, by whose treachery it was to have been backed ;

a disclosure which, more than his great peril, pained the heart of the generous Edward, for in this list of hireling traitors he read the names of many, on whose honour he had pinned his faith—whom he had loved not only for their tried prowess, but cherished as the possessors of all knightly virtues, and held ever up as patrons for the observance of England's youthful chivalry.

With little less surprise did Artevelde hear of the discovery of Sir Alaine's followers in the supposed pirates, not from the fact of the Count's proving traitor, so much as at his own lack of information in a case where the treason lay so close to his own door.

“Rerefonde never, at the best, won over for my confidence,” observed the Ruward, in continuance of the subject, “for I knew him, though wise, crafty, and though brave, devoid of principle. I also felt that—for I stood between him and his views both of ambition and private interest—he loved me not; yet did I rest secure in the deep-rooted hatred

I knew he bore Count Lewes, whose once scorn of his poverty had for years been the object of his daily meditation, as revenge had been the subject of his only prayer. But this knowledge, although unlooked for and somewhat startling, is all important; since if it raises doubts near home, it also arms us with the best means to quell them, and we must be the speedier with our strong measures; for of one thing your Grace may be assured, Sir Alaine is too old a bird to dare so high a flight on his own wing alone—and now, when may the Prince's fleet be looked for?"

"With every hour of fair wind," answered the King, "the ships were already furnished, and had their crews on board, being intended for the help of Derby; the Prince would himself bear them my orders for their change of destination; and, all things going well, they have already, by my reckoning, been two days upon the seas."

"I pray the saints they were well within the sluice here," exclaimed Artevelde, "that we

might fall suddenly to work. The deputies being already mostly assembled, and as I hope, and indeed think, our present stroke not even guessed at, we'll give no time for plotting, or for the re-creation and growth of ancient coward apprehensions of the Pontiff's ban and Philip's arms ; but, calling the deputies together, at once present to them their offered Prince, your Grace's eldest born ; when we'll find arguments to convince our sturdy rogues of Flanders that the wool of England is to them more worth, and will outweigh by far the courtly smiles of France, or the saintly prayers of Rome."

"Ye say bravely and well," cried the King ; "and, by the grace of God and St. George, we'll hold Flanders scathless against both ; for, give me but frank help, a clear passage up the Scheldt, and an open door to pass through into France, let the Pope after refuse confession for the living, or mass for the dead, we will bring ye priests from England, who shall sing and say, and marry and bury, for their King's friends, maugre Legate or Pope : as for our cousin Phi-

lip, never shall the shadow of his frown be cast within bowshot of your frontier, so long as England is worth a sheaf of arrows, or has arms with pith enow to give them flight."

"Speak but thus nobly to them," exclaimed the Ruward, "and they will be won; but should they waver, or refuse—yet are we safe of this great measure, for to that end will I appeal in person from these coward deputies to their masters, and hurrying on the spur before their stately progress, hie me from town to town, and calling forth the commons, win *their* voices to clamour on our side; they have at least sense to heed the friend who has served them, and will not fail to echo any call of mine, who never yet deceived them or made a promise that lives unredeemed."

These details, so much in unison with the ambitious designs of Edward against France, being fully completed, it was agreed that the King should remain even where he now was till the arrival of his fleet, when he should hold his court on board that huge ship the

Catherine, whose bulk would afford ample room to give a novel and royal welcome to the deputies, and be at the same time more secure than walls of stone against eaves-droppers.

“And now,” said Artevelde, speaking in a changed tone, and exhibiting strong marks of suppressed feeling, “these general interests being, as far as now may be, laid fairly bare between, and well considered, let me further pray your Grace’s ear to listen to some more personal ties of mine.”

“I guess at that you would speak of,” interrupted the King, “your daughter? She is most likely by this on her way hither, on board our fleet; or if she be left behind, doubt nothing for her happiness or security, placed as she is beneath the immediate care of Philippa of England.”

“It is indeed of that noble young maiden I would speak,” replied Artevelde: “but first hear me tell, what is at this time unknown to many living—she is no child or kin of mine.”

visiting me at Ghent ; thither he came, bringing with him the trusty nurse, and her anxiously watched charge, here he presently relieved his full heart by confiding to me his secret : and out of this strange disclosure, there soon grew a no less strange covenant between us two.

“ That same son of mine, for whom your gracious queen stood mother at the font, was but a little older than the young heiress of Courtressin—the compact first duly made with the advice and signature of my lost friend, Van Heylen, our purpose was confided to the same ancient nurse, and the children both sent in her care to the neighbourhood of Brussels, where she had relatives. In due time after, the death of my young Philip was quietly bruited, and in due time forgotten—I next, a proper period having been suffered to elapse, caused the young Bertha to be brought to my house, where by degrees she became known and recognized as my near kinswoman and adopted daughter ; and even now is, I know, by the world, conceived to possess at least an illegi-

timate title to that appellation : meantime my Philip grew up as the young heir of Courtrassin, whilst I was publicly named as his guardian ; thus, on his reputed father's death, the care of my son devolved solely upon me, his natural protector.

“ By this well attested compact then,” he continued, handing to the wondering and interested King, a carefully kept parchment, “ you will learn it was agreed that our children should at the right age be wedded to each other, the daughter of Courtrassin in lieu of her wide domain being secured the inheritance of all my gained wealth ; whilst as the wife of the Seigneur her husband, her children would peaceably inherit that, which might have been wrested by the strong hand from their mother, or at the least would have been the means of perilling her quiet and perpetuating the scarce healed feud between the families.

I, also, was aware of the advantage of my son's holding the rich lordship of Courtrassin,

instead of being, in the event of my sudden demise, left an unprotected citizen, to the chance of being trodden under foot by those who might rise upon my downfall, and who could hardly fail to look with an eye of hatred upon the unprivileged son of the ruler of Flanders.

“ The unlooked-for return of Sir Alaine, whose departure hence both myself and Courtressin had gladly facilitated, awakened the evil of his ambitious longings after the inheritance of his kinsman ; for, in a short time after, he, as you already know, proposed to me that a daughter of his, born of a noble Moorish ladye, whom he had borne from Spain, and, as he said, made his bride, should be affianced to my ward ; thus blending, once more, the great possessions of the houses under one head ; with an ill grace did he listen to my explanation of the covenant already existing between me and the deceased Seigneur ; I knew the nature of the man, little likely

tamely to bear the disappointment of such high hopes, and his present movements prove that he has not slumbered over his revenge.

“ Thus ends my tale ; and now bear with me if I add, what your Grace well knows, how truly wedded I have been ever to your interests ; you have, in your nobleness, graced my humble name with the proud title of friend —let me, then, I say, conjure you, by the remembrance of this service, and in the name of this thrice-honoured friendship, if, in our present bold venture, it prove my lot to be circumvented by mine enemies, and so to die, do not forget these children of mine ; for in that dear light are they both received by me, but see the compact of their father’s fulfilled, unless it prove, which I cannot think likely to happen, utterly repugnant to themselves—in the which case to you I further bequeath their disposal, praying you to extend to their helplessness your powerful protection, even for love of me, and for my soul’s peace.”

Thus Artevelde concluded his strange re-

lation, to which Edward had listened with deep attention, and evident interest ; extending his right hand to the Ruward, he solemnly made reply—

“ By the faith of a friend, by the honour of a knight, I vow to see full justice rendered, not only to these twain, but to all others whom you love, should any ill betide you, and I be left behind—so set your mind at rest : now let us up, and learn if the wakeful watch which gave you, this morn, such timely note of our approach, have yet discovered any sign of the coming of our expedition.”

The day had been more than half spent in the full development and arrangement of the intended great political change it becomes our province to hint at merely, in so much as it squares in with the fortunes of them we follow ; and when, in obedience to the King's invitation, Artevelde followed to the deck, it became a matter of no small surprise to both, to behold the expected ships already hovering, in picturesque groups off the mouth of the

sluice, preparing to enter over the bar with the flood tide, which, luckily, timed so well with their arrival.

Even before this, the news of the fleet's approach had already been borne to the town of Sluys, and its whole population might at this moment be seen in the distance, hurrying onward, impatient to welcome the coming islanders, whose lavish expenditure in times past had won for them, amongst a money-loving people, universal popularity. Already might their distant hurras be heard, echoing along between the deep embankments whose tortuous course they trod ; whilst from seaward the louder and nearer cheers of the foremost vessel's crew, as it floated over the bar, came booming landward with the breeze.

Onward they now rapidly came in gallant order, the smallest craft heading the van, each galley having both waste and deck crowded with well-harnessed soldiery. Nearly the last, one noble ship there was, caught every eye, for beneath the silken awning raised over its deck,

the flowing robes of a group of softer beings were easily distinguished, as with their white hands they sought to restrain the loosened tresses that wantoned in the summer wind ; whilst with eager curiosity their bright eyes wandered over the unvarying surface of the strange land before them.

At length in sober majesty, closing up the rear, the great Catherine herself came slowly on, with her white canvass half-clewed up rolling like coming clouds before the wide spread yards that seemed to bend and groan beneath the weight ; high above her prow floated the banner of the Prince of Wales, from every mast and spar, innumerable flags and pennons curled and writhed, serpent like, in the eddy of the sails, till, coming yet nearer, she became more conspicuous from the plumed and dazzling throng that crowded her towering poop ; foremost amongst these, easily distinguished by his youthful appearance and richly emblazoned cyclas, might be seen the candidate for the sovereignty of Flanders,

Prince Edward of Wales, his eyes intently riveted upon the deck of the Morning Star, towards which one standing beside him in a plain grey gown was directing his attention ; this was James Audeley, who had some time before quitted the harbour to greet the Prince, and who now thus pointed out to his anxious gaze the form of his father, where he stood by the side of the Ruward, watching with no less eagerness this proud entry of his son.

Waving their eager hands and arms aloft, towards each other, the royal pair quickly arrested the attention of all : the noble person of Edward became known through the meau disguise he yet, unconsciously, wore : like an electric shock the joyful discovery flew from ship to ship ; and in an instant there arose a cry of “ The King !—the King !—the King ! ” that shook the hollow banks of the wide sluice even to their lowest depths, and, being caught by the multitude on shore, was yet more wildly borne along, till, thundering against the gates of the distant town, it spoke

his coming, and thence, like a watch-word, whispered from lip to lip by the wondering sentinels, died not until it made quick circle of the farthest wall.

A few minutes more brought the barge of the Ruward alongside the Catherine, and rushing down the stair that already hung there, the Prince was clasped to the breast of his proud parent. The king was forgotten in that moment ; before the eyes of multitudes the father lavished a thousand caresses on his fair boy, thus giving free scope to feelings in which the meanest here could sympathize, who, in return with redoubled acclamations, evinced their delight at beholding in a mighty monarch these unerring evidences of our common humanity.

Less noisy, yet far more touchingly tender, was the meeting of the stern Ruward and his adopted daughter, who, under the protection of the Ladye Mowbray, was, together with many other noble dames and damsels, royally accommodated on board of the Arion—the vessel

next in bulk to the Catherine, which last bore their several lords and brothers—for in attendance here on the Prince floated the gravest of England's council, together with the most promising of her unfledged chivalry. Eager came these youths, panting alike for pleasure and for glory, and burning all to win a knightly name.

Slowly the gay fleet continued to float upward with the tide for the few intervening miles between them and the moorings; whilst moving parallel with them on the lofty embankments, wound a living mass, composed of all ages and qualities, reiterating undying shouts of welcome, feasting their eyes with the rich show, and their imaginations with the sudden influx of wealth likely to be poured forth from the glittering source floating beside them.

As the King's ship alone passed beneath the drawbridge and entered into the deep basin within the walls—of which some traces may yet be seen in the now wall-less town of Sluys—

the authorities, decked in their robes of ceremony, awaited, with all due observance, to receive him, attended by those deputies from the near towns of Bruges, Danime, and Ypres, &c., as were yet arrived.

These cceremonies over, the King gave notice of his intention of landing on the following day, also desiring due preparation might be made for a pilgrimage he at that time would perform to the shrine of our Ladye at Ardembourg, there to return thanks for his preservation and make a rich offering, which, during his late peril, he had solemnly vowed, to that holy place.

The bustle by degrees subsided, the weary populace gradually dispersed to recruit themselves for the next day's show ; those of the voyagers disposed for dissipation, or anxious to gratify curiosity, eagerly sought the shore, until at length the Catherine was left to the King and the nobles of his council, who, attended by the Ruward and one or two to whom he divulged his intended movement,

spent a great part of this night in one of those weary debates which form the tax ambition ever pays for power.

And where, during these stirring hours, was Leonard Borgia? Alas! he was *alone* here, for now, when every tongue found some listening ear into which it might whisper its wonders at the present, or anticipations of the coming events, he alone was constrained to silence, or held commune only with his in-born thoughts; nor were these now so bright as he had once vainly imagined that they would be, the career of arms, for which he panted, set fairly as it was before him; for had he not won the notice of his noble master beyond his hopes? did he not already stand a bolder mark for fame than many of high lineage and proud name? Whence then came this melancholy, this thankless curdling of the blood, which in this bright hour came over him, despite his efforts to repulse the ungenerous feeling? Was it because he was unnoticed and passed by, or coldly

looked on where he stood, and, clad in the plain habit of his voyage, certainly formed a strange exception to the gaily plumed beings with whom he mingled? or was it because James Audeley had so long left him thus uncountenanced and solitary? No, not so, for well he knew that generous youth was even now busily engaged trumpeting his qualities and service done amongst the haughty spirits, who, without some such precaution, might have but rudely brooked the new honour done to a companion so lowly in their eyes.

None are so sightless as the wilful blind; had he but watched the ever fixed direction of his own sight, this idle self-questioning had been needless, for from the moment he beheld the Ruward ascend the Arion's side, he saw no other object than that same ship; henceforward not a motion on her deck escaped his ken, as amidst the lovely throng that moved so lightly there his intense look sought for one added form, but in vain sought, for Bertha left not the cabin, where, from her own lips, her eager

father again heard the story of her past dangers ; in which relation, although the lover heard it not, the name of Leonard Borgia was repeated too often to be easily forgotten by any listener to the tale.

At last just as they neared the entrance to the inner harbour Bertha appeared on deck ; and, as she conspicuous stood amidst that throng of beauty, Leonard repaid his eyes for all their longing past—he watched each graceful motion of her form, as making and receiving adieu she passed to the attendant barge, and fed upon her loveliness till, swept from his sight by the ready oars, she became confounded in the eager throng awaiting to hail the Ruward and his recovered daughter ; for in the vessel's lengthened absence a thousand rumours, each more fearful than its herald, had been permitted uncontradicted to go forth to fill the ready ears of gossip wonder, and lead them from the truth.

“ So must we be ever divided,” whispered Borgia to himself, as his idol vanished. “ She

is henceforth as far above all touch of mine as yon bright sun is, the which I may sometimes fix my dazzled eyes upon, but would be deemed mad, did I aim at any nearer commune with than is common to the meanest of my kind."

Thus inwardly holding converse with a most bitter fancy he turned to depart, when by his side he beheld the tall figure of Maltravers closely marking his vexed and excited air.

"Why, how is this?" cried the observer, "you, too, are dull as I am, where all, save us, are joyful, or at least wear the face of joy."

"You have doubtless your reasons," pettishly replied Leonard, nettled by a something caustic lurking in the large keen eye of the questioner.

"In plenty, by my soul," was the reply, sharply given, "and, did you know all, you would allow so much."

"I doubt it not, and as surely have I mine."

“And therein lies the pity,” continued Maltravers coolly, “since 'tis a marvel in one so young and so well placed in the royal favour, whence all honour emanates that's precious to young hearts; but I seek no further, your eyes having already told to my wit, what your tongue withholds from my friendship.”

“My eyes—have told what? how mean you?” hastily demanded Leonard, in his turn the questioner.

“Aye! how long think ye have they been unwinking rivetted upon yon ship, so fairly freighted? You cannot guess?—I know! listen further—you are *in love!*”

“In love!” repeated Leonard, with an air of innocent surprise, which relaxed even the grave features of Maltravers to a smile.

“Aye,” he answered, “you are in love—so have a care, since I see you wot not of your peril. I ask not your confidence—I have told you that you are in love: to-morrow, by this time, I will most likely tell you with whom—good night.”

The speaker quitted the forecastle, and the confused youth yet stood, inwardly repeating his magical words.

“In love!” he cried, for the twentieth time, “and yet, I fear me he is a right diviner. It is too true, I feel that I am blindly, madly in love: so much he knows, may know, I care not—but never must he guess with whom; oh no, no! that were too great a folly to be whispered even to the breeze which passes now so mute and voiceless by, to be no more recalled.”

He was roused from this new reverie by the voice of Audeley, who came to tell him that the Lord de Vere was just come on board, from the Arion, and that he had in charge a packet for him from old Messer Borgia. With many thanks did Leonard receive this welcome news, and right joyfully did he peruse the laconic epistle of the aged artist, which concluded, after sundry mysterious hints, and a thrice repeated charge to be prudent, with an intimation that it was probable occasion would arise

for their meeting somewhat sooner than was contemplated by either at the time of their parting ; lastly came the not least welcome tidings that, in the train of the old Lord Chamberlain, came honest Cyril, in charge of Soldan, both of whom, as the old man quaintly said, “ pined to follow after their master.”

Accompanied and assisted by Audeley, Leonard next saw the honest fellow and his gallant charge fairly landed, together with sundry heavy mails, stuffed with all the appointments befitting his present place, and of a costliness not to be excelled ; this whole cargo was at length conveyed to a dwelling hard by, where quarters were assigned to some of the household—the monarch himself lying on board his well appointed ship.

From the lips of his light-hearted groom, Leonard learned that his uncle was well in health, but, as the man said, “ much abroad, and little at home o' late, seeming sore perplexed and troubled with some out-door matter.” Master Watts too had, as it ap-

peared, consoled him for the loss of his apprentice, which was what Leonard could not do for the absence of his humble friend ; and, as he sought his couch that night, he would have given all his new possessions to have been assured of Gilbert Hawkwood's safety, since the rough hour of their recent separation.

END OF VOL. II.

